JOHNNY WINTER INTERVIEW

Guitar & Bass

A History Of Whammy

From Bigsby to Floyd Rose: how vibratos transformed the electric guitar

Danelectro and Orange reviews

PLUS!
ESP
Joe Satriani
Vox
Waddy Wachtel
and more...

Arch Angels
Big-bodied beauties on display

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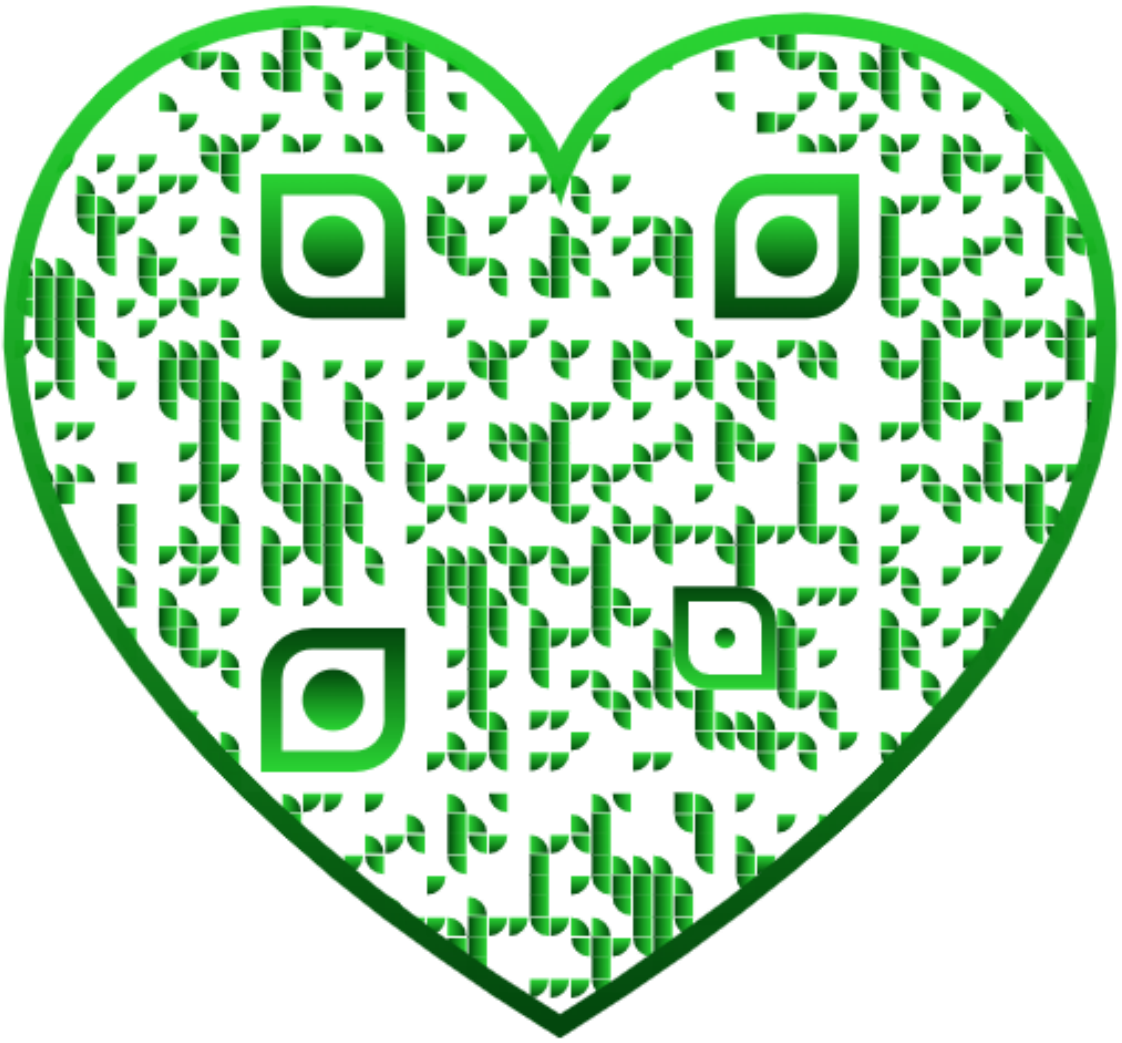

CADILLAC IN MODEL "A" THE WORLD IS YOURS THAT'LL BE THE DAY PEGGY SUE
BABY BLUE LA BAMBA APACHE
LET'S GO TRIPPIN' TRICK BAG
WALK, DON'T RUN MISIRLOU
I FOUGHT THE LAW SURFIN' U.S.A.
HELP ME RHONDA NOWHERE MAN
PURPLE HAZE FIRE
ALL YOU NEED IS LOVE
KICK OUT THE JAMS F.B.I.
ALL ALONG THE WATCHTOWER
THE NIGHT THEY DROVE OLD DIXIE DOWN
BELL BOTTOM BLUES PROUD MARY
WHAT IS LIFE LAYLA
SMOKE ON THE WATER
REELIN' IN THE YEARS
SUPERFLY THAT LADY
YOU AIN'T SEEN NOTHIN' YET
SWEET HOME ALABAMA MONEY
TOO ROLLING STONED
DIXIE CHICKEN MAGIC MAN
CARRY ON MY WAYWARD SON
WALK THIS WAY FREEWAY JAM
BEAST OF BURDEN BAD PENNY
FLY LIKE AN EAGLE
SULTANS OF SWING
WONDERFUL TONIGHT LE FREAK
MY SHARONA LIMELIGHT
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RUN TO THE HILLS MANEATER
ELEPHANT TALK LENNY
PRIDE (IN THE NAME OF LOVE)
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BLACK STAR
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SHAKESPEARE'S SISTER
FINISH WHAT YA STARTED
SLOW TURNING
SEE A LITTLE LIGHT
SMOKING GUN TUFF ENUFF
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CLIFFS OF DOVER
ENDLESS, NAMELESS
DAMN RIGHT I'VE GOT THE BLUES
WICKED GAME COMEDOWN
BLUE ON BLACK
SWALLOWED
SCAR TISSUE
ALIVE NO RAIN
BULLET WITH BUTTERFLY WINGS
SHOW ME HOW TO LIVE
DAMMIT LAST NITE
MAPS GRAVITY
DIVINIATIONS ABEL
I BET YOU LOOK GOOD ON THE DANCEFLOOR
'TIL SUMMER COMES AROUND
FORGET YOU
BEVERLY HILLS
WHO WOULDN'T FALL IN LOVE WITH YOU
GET LUCKY BLACK CHANDELIER

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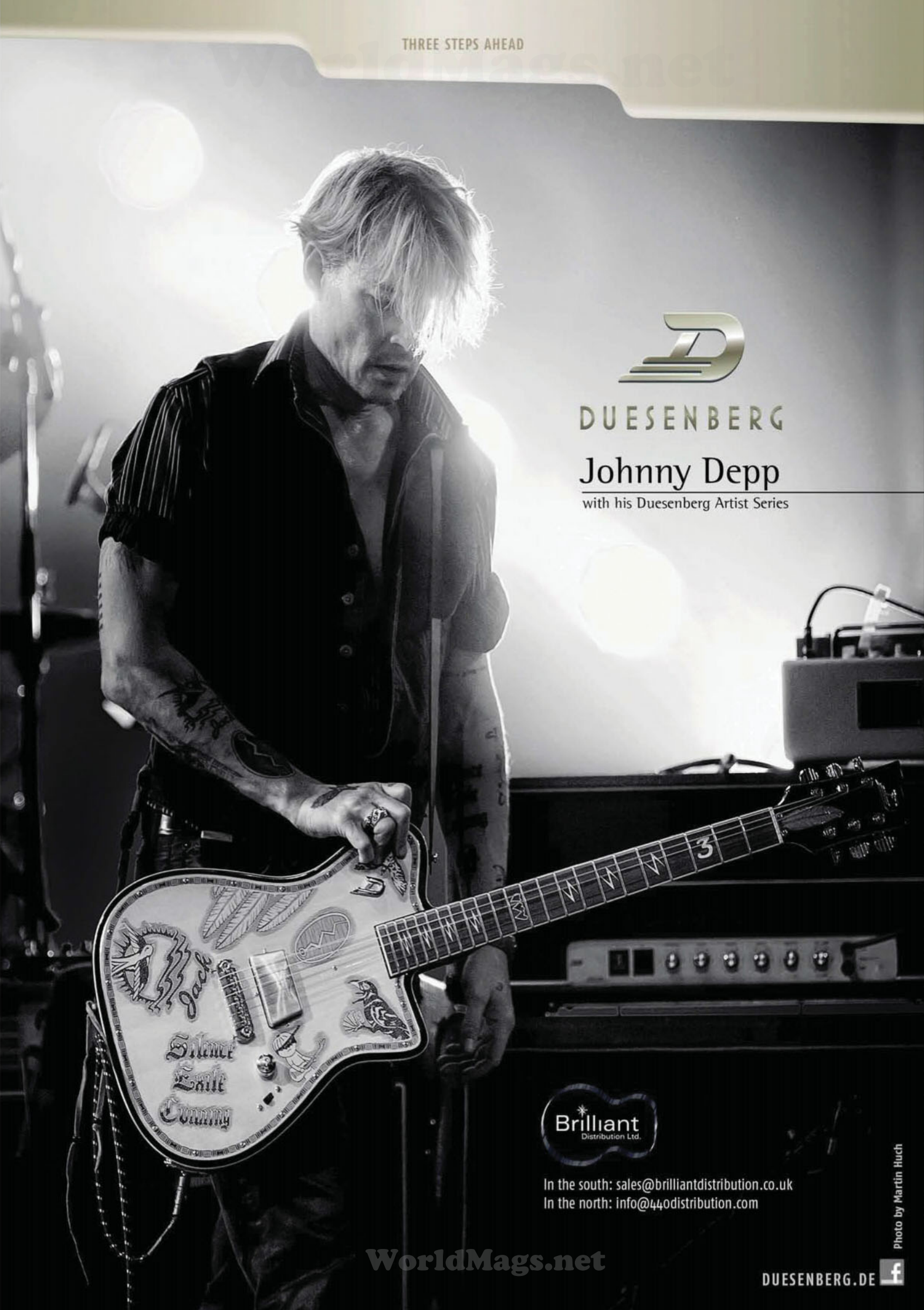

DUESENBERG

Johnny Depp

with his Duesenberg Artist Series

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Photo by Martin Huch

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Bending the rules...

If the first guitar you ever tried had some kind of vibrato or whammy bar on it, I'd bet good money that it didn't take you very long to try it out. Do you remember the fun you had just bending random notes? Don't say it was just me. Please. Such nostalgia aside, the use of vibrato has been one of the defining characteristics of the electric guitar for so long that we decided the story of it was worthy of your attention. It's a story that spans the genres and the generations, and it's a fine, fine tale to be told.

If you're in a mood to ponder your next purchase (heck, even if you aren't) then take a mosey on down to our reviews section where the *G&B* verdict on gear from Danelectro, Orange, Vox and many others is awaiting your eyeballs. Vintage fans can turn to *Private Collection* and Sid Bishop for old-school sustenance, and workshops on sorting out your buzzing problems and playing progressive rock will help you on the road to guitar-playing heaven.

We wish you success in all your guitar-related endeavours and we hope you enjoy the issue...

John

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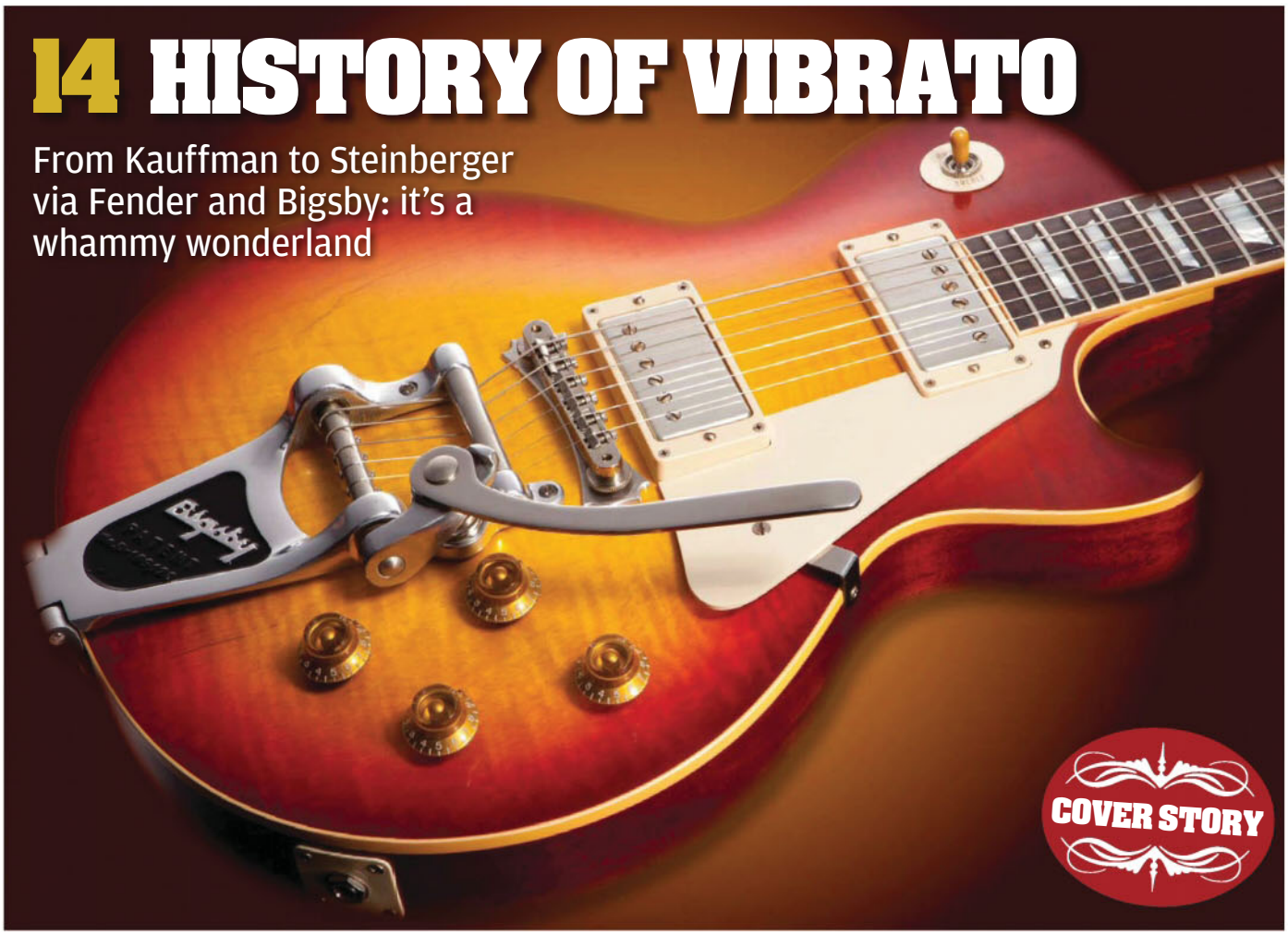

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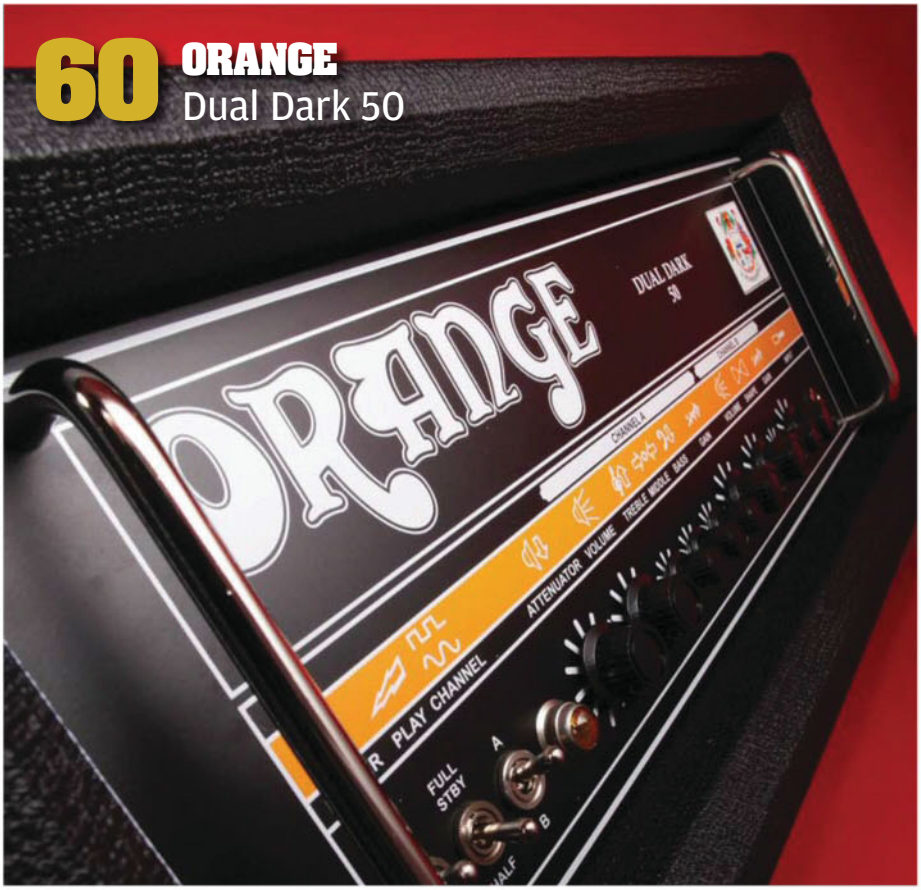

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Sweet double-cut with upgraded bridge, startling colours and old stock pickups

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Take a classic single-cut design, add a Bigsby vibrato and lashings of gold, and enjoy

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Small but very, very powerful, the H9 gives you a custom choice of Eventide effects

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Compact cutaway mid-priced electro-acoustic which could work well for fingerpickers

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Useful passive five-string which competes with the Far East in price... and that's something

Darkglass Duality Fuzz 79
Major mayhem and general sonic violence for bass. That's got to go down well

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For bass, guitar or anything else, this synthy fuzz will explode your head like a rotten melon

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when you subscribe
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Vintage

Private Collection 84
Tee Kay is a man of very good taste, and he's gathered a selection of real high-end golden era beauties. We're thinking of moving in

The Bishop Of Denmark Street 94
This month Sid Bishop reassesses how some 'also rans' shape up today, from the Gibson Firebird to Fender's semi-acoustics

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Reverberations

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Please note, we reserve the right to edit where we feel it is appropriate, or to print extracts from longer correspondences

STAR LETTER

HOLDING BACK THE YEARS

John's Les Paul: 'Relic instruments don't come with any magic in them'

Re: the *Earn Your Scars* letter in the April issue; I believe that there is something special about an instrument that has been played extensively by one person, especially a guitar. There is a bond formed between that person and the guitar. The marks and wear on the guitar are a symbol of that bond, and make that instrument special. If that instrument is handed down to a family member or given to someone special, then the bond is hopefully transferred. Purchasing an artificially-worn guitar seems to misrepresent that sentiment, and it isn't something I would personally do. Cosmetically, I don't really have any preference; obviously, there are people who like the look of beat-up guitars and there is a market for that, so they will be made and sold, and that is fine. But those relic'd instruments don't come with any magic in them. Somebody has to bestow that magic with many hours of playing their heart out. To that end, here's a photo of my old friend of 40 years...

John Eremic *via email*

G&B **As you'll see elsewhere in this letters page, the debate about pre-aged guitars continues apace. However, we're unashamedly suckers for people who call their guitar an 'old friend'. It's what we think, too... we're just too emotionally backward to admit it.**

Rosetti

Written a Star Letter? Contact Rosetti on 01376 550033 to claim your Rickenbacker goodie bag

ORVILLE! WHO IS YOUR VERY BEST FRIEND?

I enjoyed – as I always do any of your historic articles – the piece on the Heritage 80 series of Gibson Les Pauls in the May issue. But I would venture to say that there was a heffelump in the room that was ignored, as no mention was made of the Orville guitars made in Japan, even though unlicensed Tokais were. I've been fortunate enough to play several original '50s bursts so I know how they feel and play, and in truth there's good and bad, as with every guitar. I've also played several Orvilles – indeed, I own one – and can say that at their best they are a very convincing stab at the genre. The early example I has a solid one-piece body with figured maple cap of correct contour, it features a long-tenon neck, pin bridge (a detail missed in the Heritage series) and imported pickups and hardware of the exact same spec as those fitted to the Heritage series made at

Orvilles: 'A convincing stab at the genre'

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the same time. The timber is exactly correct, which Gibson at the time were unable to replicate due to import bans to the USA.

Inevitably, as with any rant, I'm going to claim it plays as well, if not better than, a '50s Les Paul! Well, no, I'm not, as they're different... but sometimes different is good, and in this case on a guitar that can be had for around £500, very, very good indeed.

May I suggest a future article on the maze-like complexities of Gibson's lovechild Orville/ Epiphone? There are many noteworthy instruments with guitar bodies made in the Far East but fitted out in the USA, which are real bargains to look out for if you want top quality on a tight budget.

David Siddon *Chesterfield*

G&B **As with a lot of our historical features, space limitations forced us to focus the story. We agree that the Orville tale is one worth telling, and along with a bunch of other historical tales one is currently in the pipeline. We did feature a history of Epiphone in March 2010, but we daresay it won't be the last Epiphone story we print.**

ORDER! ORDER!

Though I'm an adept guitarist with a reasonably dexterous left hand, I must confess that the perplexing and physically impossible fingering given in *The Lost Chord* box on page 11 of the April 2014 issue did give me a headache, not to mention extremely sore third and fourth fingers!

Am I correct in guessing that you were thereby having an April Fool's laugh... just to see whether any of your readers are actually 'awake' enough to spot your third and fourth finger dot anomaly?

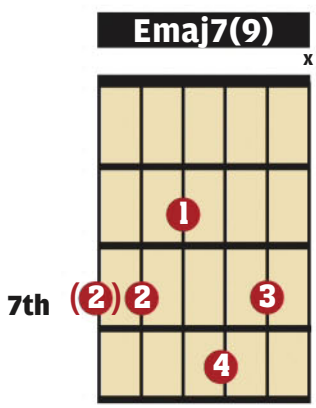
I'm wondering whether I'm the only reader to have noticed your erroneous fingering dots... If so, have I won a prize for being awake? Well... maybe you'd like to 'reward' me by featuring Zal Cleminson in the magazine at some hopefully not too distant future date. Hey, it does seem very unjust that the majority of your younger readers will be totally unfamiliar with this truly great player! I hope you'll agree with me there. Anyway, it seems appropriate to end this letter by quoting a lyric from the late great Alex Harvey's *Give My Compliments To The Chief*: *'You know that major sevenths break my bones...'*

Mick Owen *Bristol*

G&B **As much as we'd like to claim that it was a deliberate joke on our part, honesty dictates that we should admit it was a keying-in error on our part. We apologise for any mangled digits and print the correct version here to right this particular wrong. You weren't the only one who noticed it, Mick, but we printed your letter due to your fine sentiments regarding Zal Cleminson, and for a great guitar-referencing lyric.**

RELICS ON TRIAL

It's been a long time that I wanted to write to you. The last issue of *Guitar & Bass* is just perfect, as usual. But the main reason to write to your great magazine is the letter sent by Mr Hillman (*Earn Your Scars*) in the April issue. I totally agree with Mr Hillman: the fake vintage guitar mania is just ridiculous. Who could believe a 25-year-old guitarist playing a 'real' aged Telecaster? If it was a real one, would he dare to play it on stage? If he had found it in antique store, wouldn't he sell it at auction instead of carrying the precious thing around? The guy knows it's a fake relic, I know it's a fake relic, Fender knows it's a fake, so what's the point? I personally own a few guitars, some of them more than 30 years old, and believe me, I take care of them because they cost me a lot of money to begin with! I was still in my teens when I started to buy guitars. They may have some dents, some scratches in the back because of my belt buckle or jeans rivets, and their metal parts are more or less faded or rusted, but they were bought new and are still in good shape. I respect them because they are beautiful objects. People who buy 'factory-aged' guitars are just dreamers telling themselves beautiful stories (such as, I found it in an old pawnshop, etc). To end on a different subject, I loved your *Greatest Guitar Riffs* article, but you could have added four more pages because so many are missing!



The correct fingering for April's *Lost Chord*. Apologies for any hospitalisation caused

P Meslet *France*

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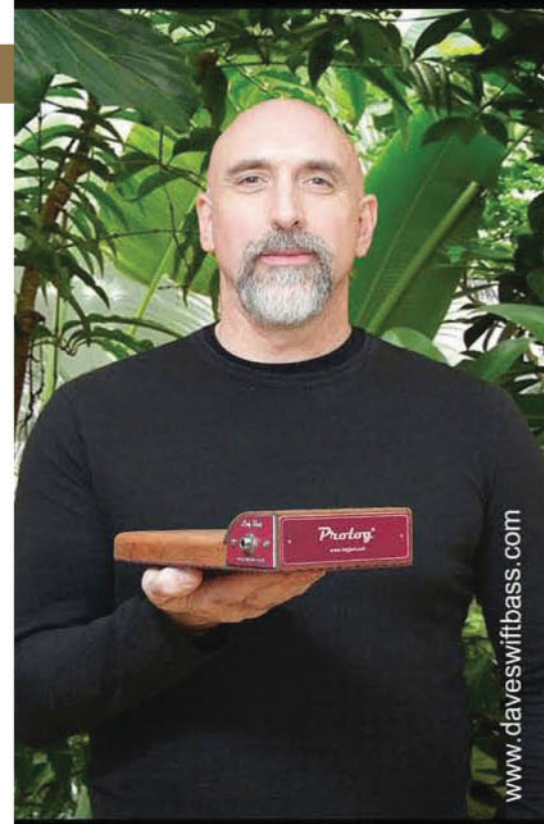

Dave Swift and his Prolog®
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Woke up this mornin'... NEWS

It's a looker – and the US base price is in the region of $7000

PERFECT SKIN

Gibson's latest Custom Shop creation sees Joe Bonamassa's treasured vintage Les Paul recreated for the 21st century

The marriage made in heaven that is Joe Bonamassa and Gibson has gone to the next level with the announcement of the new 'Skinnerburst' 1959 Gibson Les Paul. Bonamassa fans will know that the '59 Les Paul he calls 'Principal Skinner' is his favourite instrument, and the Skinnerburst is the fruit of a long-term collaboration with the Gibson Custom Shop to recreate the original in all its glory. No expense was spared as every aspect Bonamassa's guitar was scanned, studied and measured.

From its faded Dirty Lemon finish to its custom-wound humbucking pickups to its precise top carve and neck profile, the Joe Bonamassa Skinnerburst 1959 Les Paul is a covetable instrument in its own right. The maple top's figuring and carved arch have been as precisely matched as possible to Joe's original, as is the exact profile and feel of the '59 neck shape. A nickel-plated Tune-O-Matic bridge and lightweight aluminium stopbar deliver the necessary sustain. As regards to electrics, Gibson's Custombucker and Burstbucker #3 pickups have been specially tweaked to the specs of the '59 Les Paul's original PAFs.

And it doesn't stop there: historically accurate binding colour, aged cellulose trapezoid inlays, hot-hide glue neck construction, and period-correct tuners all complement a fine rendition of Joe's constant stage and studio companion. Of 150 guitars hand-aged by Gibson's world-renowned aging artist Tom Murphy, 50 will be played and signed by Joe himself. A further 150 will be treated to Gibson Custom's VOS process, making a Limited Edition of 300 guitars in total.

Ten Year After Reveal New Line-up

Bluesman Marcus Bonfanti and former Alexis Corner bassist Colin Hodgkinson have joined Ten Years After. They replace guitarist Joe Good and original bass player Leo Lyons, who decided to focus on their other outfit, Hundred Seventy Split. Bonfanti is honoured to join the band founded by the incomparable Alvin Lee, who passed away last year. 'I'm really looking forward to the opportunity of playing with these great musicians,' says Bonfanti, 'and honouring the memory and genius of Alvin and the body of music he created with the band.'

ORANGE GETS SOME AMPLITUDE

IK Multimedia has announced two new apps: AmpliTube Orange for iPhone/iPod touch and AmpliTube Orange for iPad. Officially licensed and developed in close partnership with Orange Amps, AmpliTube Orange is a real-time mobile Orange Amplifier and effects studio featuring digital models of five classic and modern Orange guitar amplifiers and one Orange bass amplifier. IK tells us that each amp and cab model has been meticulously recreated in both looks and sound to deliver spot-on Orange tone any time, everywhere. For more info: www.amplitube.com

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Above: royal approval. Below: Rory with his Eggle

RORY GALLAGHER GUITAR SOLD

Rory Gallagher's custom-built Patrick Eggle guitar has sold for £25,000 at auction. Expected to fetch between £15,000 to £20,000, the Limited Edition JS Berlin electric – number 30 out of a run of 150 – was custom built to the blues-rock legend's playing style, and was one of the last guitars he took possession of before he passed away in 1995, aged 47. Photos of Rory with the guitar accompanied the *Big Guns – The Very Best Of Rory Gallagher* CD.

MASTER FENDERS

Fender Custom Shop has introduced two new collections of instruments, the Artisan Series and Master Designed Series. Inspired by the Master Built instruments created for the 2013 Tokyo Guitar Show, among the new Artisan Series models is the Spalted Maple-Top Stratocaster with a new 'buckeye' finish and chrome lipstick pickup covers. The essential concept behind the Master Design Series is to create the instruments master builders would make for themselves, and the Fender Custom Shop Master Design '50s Relic Strat is one of the inaugural models in the series. Designed by Todd Krause, it features a moss green nitro finish, three shielded Custom Shop Fat '50s single coil pickups and a maple neck with a modern 9.5" radius and 21 narrow jumbo frets. Far right is the Master Design '63 Relic Strat.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Tin Pan Alley Gets Blue Plaque

London's Denmark Street has been recognised with a hi-tech blue plaque to celebrate its musical heritage. Featuring a QR code that offers smartphone users audio and visual information on the area's history, the plaque is located above the Giaconda Café, which previously welcomed David Bowie, Elton John, Marc Bolan and Jimi Hendrix.

Guitar Auction Tests Market

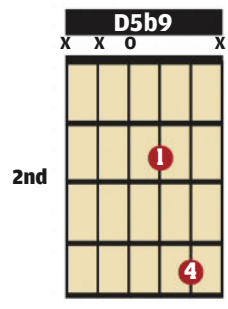
California-based collector Hank Risan put 265 of his 700 vintage guitars on sale at Guernsey's auctioneers in the biggest such event in recent years, with standouts including a 1959 ex-Clapton Gibson J-200 and an ex-Stephen Stills Gibson SJ-200. The sale proved controversial, with sky-high estimates and accusations of undisclosed repair issues. However, roughly half the items were sold, and Martin themselves bought an 1930 OM-45 Deluxe for their museum – for $330,000.

Go North West

There's yet another fine reason to attend this year's North West Guitar Show at Haydock Park Racecourse Exhibition Centre on Sunday 18th May. What is it? Well vintage guitar guru and the *Guitar & Bass* columnist Phil Harris will be appearing with the '59 Gibson Les Paul previously owned by Peter Green and Gary Moore. Phil will be playing the guitar as well as talking about instruments magic and history. There will also be an opportunity to have your picture taken with the guitar in return for a £5 donation to charity. For further info: 01925 813185/07850 744604; info@guitarshows.co.uk

The Lost Chord

Only three notes, but what an impact the three notes in this D5b9 have. The formula for this voicing – from lowest note to highest – is root, fifth and flattened ninth. Resolve the tension in this chord by following it with D5: just lift the fourth finger, and place the third finger on the second string, third fret.



Calendar SHOWS, GIGS, FESTIVALS, WORKSHOPS

Acoustic Festival Of Great Britain
30 MAY – 1 JUNE
Fairport Convention, Steve Harley, Rodney Branigan, BabaJack, Marcus Bonfanti, the Animals, Nick Harper, Ben Waters, Otway & Barrett
WHERE? **Uttoxeter Racecourse, Wood Lane, Staffordshire ST14 8BD**
TICKETS **Weekend £95, £20 more for camping**
CONTACT **www.acousticfestival.co.uk**

Red Rooster
6 JUNE – 8 JUNE
The Jim Jones Revue, Pete Molinari, Big Boy Bloater & The Limits, the Urban Voodoo Machine
WHERE? **Euston Hall, Euston, Suffolk IP24 2QW**
TICKETS **Weekend £42.50, £20 more for camping**
CONTACT **www.redrooster.org.uk**

Linton Festival
20 JUNE – 22 JUNE
Wilko Johnson, Aynsley Lister, Moreland & Arbuckle, Geno Washington, Simon McBride
WHERE? **The Alma Inn Linton, Ross-On-Wye, Herefordshire HR9 7RY**
TICKETS **Fri 20 June £23, Sat 21 June £32, Sun 22 June £27, weekend £72**
CONTACT **www.lintonfestival.org**

Burton Agnes Jazz & Blues Festival
27 JUNE – 29 JUNE
Chantel McGregor, King Biscuit and the Pleasure Boys, the Alligators, Djangologie
WHERE? **Burton Agnes Hall, East Yorks YO25 4NB**
TICKETS **Weekend £70**
CONTACT **www.burtonagnes.com**

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Album reviews

Brian May & Kerry Ellis

THE CANDLELIGHT CONCERTS – LIVE AT MONTREAUX 2013

Eagle Rock

Ever wondered what Brian May would sound like without his Red Special, Voxes and treble booster set to 'stun'? Well, based on this document of his performances with musical theatre chanteuse

Kerry Ellis, 'really rather lovely' is the answer. The pair take on songs from the shows, Queen classics and even the odd Christmas song with taste and verve.

John Mayall

A SPECIAL LIFE

Forty Below

Having celebrated his 80th birthday last year, the legendry Brit bluesman shows no sign of wanting to put his feet up as he returns with first studio album in five years. Ably aided and abetted by Texas guitar player Rocky Athas, Mayall's take on

Albert King's *Floodin' In California* and Jimmy Rogers' *That's All Right* sit snugly alongside his new songs. And yes, he can still ride a blues shuffle like a maestro.

The Nels Cline Singers

MACROSCOPE

Mack Avenue

Many guitarists claim to be inventive, yet so few actually are. Cline is one of the few who've earned this title, and this latest release proves how can create a path that hopscotches between musical genres as he dishes out single-note lines

drenched in melancholia one minute before ripping it up fusion-style the next. Sonic curiosity is the name of the game here, and it's fun for all the family.

California Breed

CALIFORNIA BREED

Frontiers

Glenn Hughes' latest combo boasts Jason Bonham on drums and 23-year-old guitar man Andrew Watt. Given the sonic CVs of his compatriots, you'd forgive Watt for being inhibited in such company; nowt could be further from the truth, and the likes of

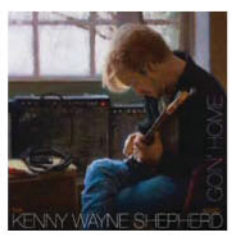
Sweet Tea proves he can dish out muscular yet funky riffage that perfectly suits Hughes's legendary pipes. Overall, this debut album gets the fist pumping and the heart righteously racing.

Kenny Wayne Shepherd Band

GOIN' HOME

Mascot Label Group

Goin' Home sees the blues-rocker delve into his record collection to explore some of his greatest influences. He's also got his address book out to enlist the help of such musical luminaries as Joe Walsh, Warren Haynes and Keb' Mo'. But have no



fear about this being a pedestrian luvvie fest: KWS and the gang instil some real (and often raucous) fire into even done-to-death cuts such as *Born Under A Bad Sign*. A fine record.

Pixies

INDIE CINDY

Pixiesmusic

Having returned to much acclaim on the festival circuit a few years back, the indie-rock legends (now minus Kim Deal, sadly) release their first full studio album in over 20 years. And it's a very good record, with Black and lead guitar player Joey

Santiago having lost none of their mojo when it comes to either delivering classic 'falling down the stairs' riffage or memorable leadlines that stick in the brain.

Ian Siegal

MAN & GUITAR

Nugene

Recorded by the BBC at the Royal Albert Hall as part of last year's London Bluesfest, this release captures the award-winning troubadour in top form. The singular 'guitar' part of the album title is a bit misleading as several were used during

the concert, including a 1930s square-neck acoustic and a National resonator, and on originals and covers Siegal employs them all like the virtuoso he is.

Little Barrie

SHADOW

Plowboy

'I wanted to do something a bit darker and slightly sountrack-y' says LB mainman Barrie Cadogan, and it's mission accomplished as the band move away from the surf-drenched *King Of The Waves*. Cadogan certainly knows his reverb

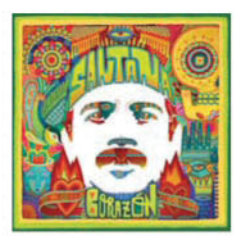
and fuzz, employing both to deliver multi-layered menace and swagger that'll hold your attention and force your hips to sway as you unleash your inner sex god.

Carlos Santana

CORAZÓN

Sony

Whilst Carlos Santana has always infused his music with many a nod to his Latin heritage, *Corazón* is the first album of his long career that is focused foursquare and true on Latin music. And it's a very easy album to love, as special guests



including Gloria Estefan, Wayne Shorter, Soledad and Los Fabulousos help the legendary guitarist explore and wring all the right emotions from the tracks.

SNAP JUDGEMENTS

Archie Bronson Outfit

WILD CRUSH

Domino

Four albums in for the Bath band, and the allure of their brand of pile-driving, caustic rock shows no signs of losing its power

Ben & Ellen Harper

CHILDHOOD HOME

Prestige Folklore

Ben Harper collaborates with his mum on this acoustic folk-soul celebration. It'll properly warm the cockles of your cockles

Marcus Malone

DO TO THE BEAST

Sub Pop

'I've got a guitar on my back and I'm goin' to raise some hell,' declares Malone on the opening track. And the Detroit blues-rocker keeps his promise

The Proof

100% THE PROOF

Note Music

When you've got Mike Summerland on an LP – and guest spots from Micky Moody, Snowy White and Charlie Fabert – quality blues guitar is guaranteed

Vargas Blues Band

HEAVY CITY BLUES

Off Yer Rocka

The Hispanic blues-rockers return once again with superior guitar work where passion isn't sacrificed for technique

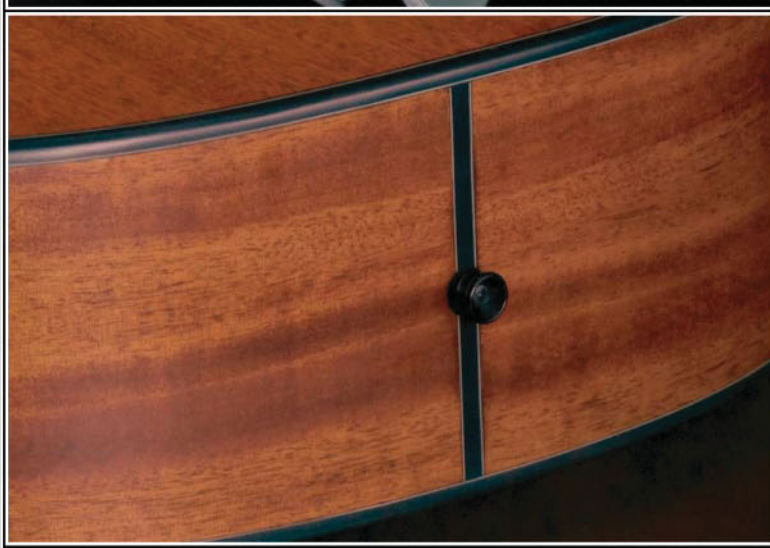
The Voodoo Sheiks

BORROWED & NEW

One Little Indian

Armed with a brand of swingalicious ol'-school rhythm and blues, the Sheiks make a decent fist of capturing their vitality on record

LAG GUITARS



IT'S ALL ABOUT DETAILS

LAG Guitars UK

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PITCH *Invasion*

From crude bolt-on devices for archtop guitars of the '30s to the transposing Steinberger TransTrem of the '80s, the tremolo has become an indispensable part of what we do. **Michael Heatley** tracks the story of string-stretching...

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Whammy bar, wang bar, vibrato arm, tremolo arm – call it what you will, the mechanism to which all these terms refer has been a part of the guitarist's armoury ever since the 1930s, and was offered as standard on the Fender Stratocaster in 1954.

But while Fender brought the phenomenon to the mass market, it also caused confusion with its advertising, because 'tremolo' is an effect commonly used in amplifiers that changes the volume of a note – something you'd do (albeit with difficulty) with the volume control.

The term correctly used to denote slight and rapid change in pitch is 'vibrato'. Vibrato can be achieved either by moving the string up and down with a fretting finger or, more easily, by a bar or arm accessible to the picking/strumming hand, to loosen or tighten the strings. This ability to vary the pitch of the strings comes at a cost. There will usually be at least one spring involved to ensure the strings return to concert pitch after pressure has been applied on them; this is not an exact science, and tuning problems may well result. The story of the vibrato has been the tale of that long, long battle.

So why on earth, when Fender introduced the Strat in 1954, did they proudly advertise their new product's vibrato system as a 'synchronized tremolo system'? Leo alone knows... but they then compounded their error by advertising amplifiers like 1956's Vibrolux, as offering vibrato when the effect in question was in fact tremolo!

Confused? Hopefully you won't be after following the history of the guitar-mounted floating bridge and the lever that makes it work. Just remember: whatever else you may read, here or elsewhere, vibrato deals with change in pitch, and tremolo deals with change in volume. ↦

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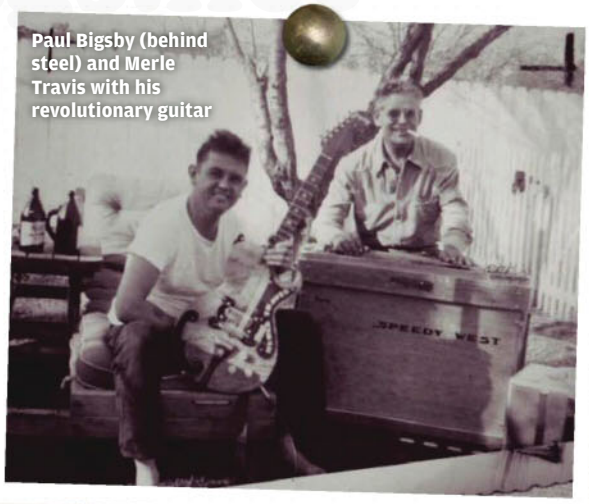
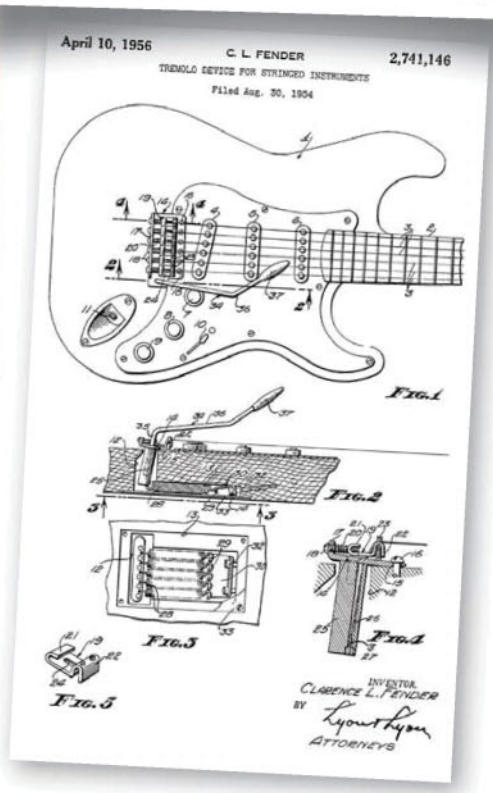
The Stratocaster of 1954 launched the concept of the factory-fitted vibrato


Paul Bigsby (behind steel) and Merle Travis with his revolutionary guitar



Leo Fender was granted a patent for his Strat 'tremolo device' in 1956

Fender's 'synchronized tremolo' had a bridge that extended into the body so that springs could counteract the pull of the strings

One thing the guitar vibrato has never been seen as, however, is a 'tone enhancer'. The sustain and tone of a 'hard tail' are generally considered to be superior to a floating bridge – so much so that the Floyd Rose systems of the '80s were derided as 'tone suckers'. Also, when a string break occurs on a vibrato-equipped guitar, the change in tension on the bridge may have unmusical repercussions. But these are risks any whammy-bar waggler will consider worth running.

Pitch pioneers

Today the name 'Bigsby' denotes a certain purpose-built vibrato system. Introduced in the early days of the electric guitar, it is rivalled in notoriety only by the later Floyd Rose, another device more often retrospectively installed than factory-fitted.

But Paul Bigsby, the man behind the earlier device, also built guitars. And one in particular, the solidbody he built in 1948 for Merle Travis, may well have been the inspiration for the Strat which arrived soon after. Ironically, it did not feature a vibrato .

Bigsby introduced his take on the vibrato tailpiece for the electric guitar in the late '40s, but he wasn't the first. That accolade belongs to the Kauffman Vibrola. If the name seems familiar, it is because Clayton Orr Kauffman, known to all as 'Doc', was Leo Fender's business partner in the K&F company, which they started together in 1945.

Prior to that Kauffman had worked for Rickenbacker, and his Vibrola, patented in 1935, appeared on that company's Electro Spanish guitars. Epiphone, not yet part of Gibson, offered it on some of their archtops and also sold it as an aftermarket option. One version used on some Rickenbacker six-string electrics used a motor to change string pitch. Unfortunately this attempt to simulate a steel guitar had a fundamental problem: if the motor that moved the tailpiece was switched off at the low or high end of the vibrato cycle, the guitar would be out of tune.

Leo Fender, who'd carried on solo when Doc Kauffman bailed out of K&F in 1946, filed a patent application for his 'synchronized tremolo' in 1954, the year the Stratocaster came to market – and, thanks to the Strat's

TIMELINE
80 years of tremolo system technology

1935
Doc Kauffman's Vibrola appears on very early Rickenbacker electrics

1946-47
Paul Bigsby starts work on his vibrato tailpiece, used on Gretsch and Gibson guitars from the early '50s A patent is issued in 1953

1954
The birth of Fender's 'synchronized tremolo', the device that introduced the term 'tremolo arm'

1958
An advanced floating, lockable tremolo appears on the Fender Jazzmaster

1962
Advent of the Gibson Vibrato on some SG models

1963
The Deluxe Vibrola (side-to-side vibrato) replaces the Gibson Vibrato

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success, it quickly became the industry standard. Although some players like Robert Cray prefer the 'hard tail' version with a fixed bridge, while Eric Clapton disables his with a block of wood, it's fair to say that vibrato and the Stratocaster go together.

First came the bridge, a solid piece of metal, with six individual saddles. Compared with the rudimentary Telecaster, it meant each string was adjustable for height and length. This pivoted on six screws attaching it to the body. It linked in turn with a solid steel 'inertia block' which extended downward to connect with three or five springs mounted horizontally inside the body. The springs counterbalanced the pull of the strings, and the floating bridge that resulted could be set up to allow either downward and upward pitch bends or down-only movement. The majority of modern tremolo systems were inspired by this design. Because bridge and tailpiece moved together, it was significantly more stable and less prone to tuning and intonation issues than its competitors.

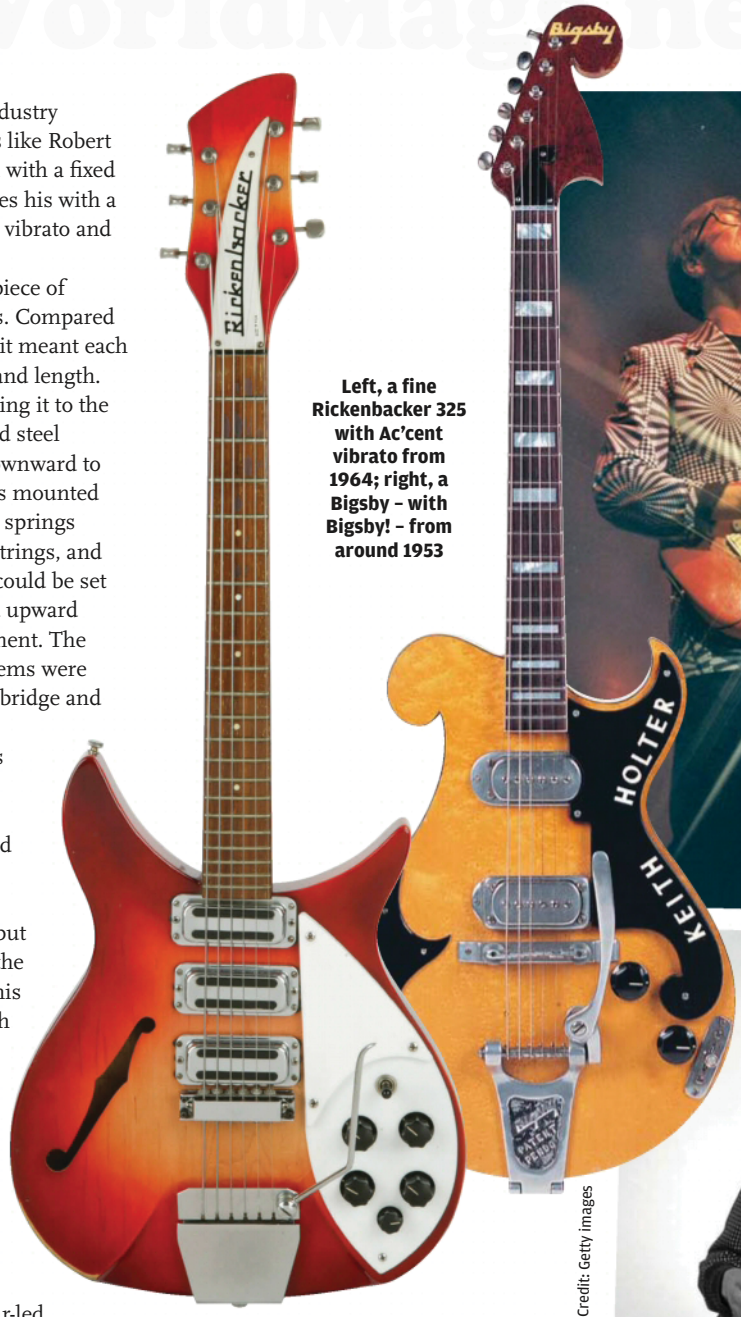
Doc Kauffman had not finished yet. A later version of his Vibrola unit was used on Rickenbacker's Capri line of guitars in the '50s, but this also had tuning issues, and the fact John Lennon replaced it on his '58-vintage Rickenbacker 325 with a Bigsby speaks volumes. The later Ac'cent Vibrola had no springs, so it proved to be slightly less troublesome.

So who was putting the vibrato on the map in the early days of rock? In Britain it was the Shadows' Hank Marvin. His hand was rarely away from the vibrato arm, and the Shads' guitar-led instrumentals gave him ample opportunity to employ it. Vibrato was designed to make the guitar 'speak', adding expression like a human voice, so this was a match made in guitar heaven.

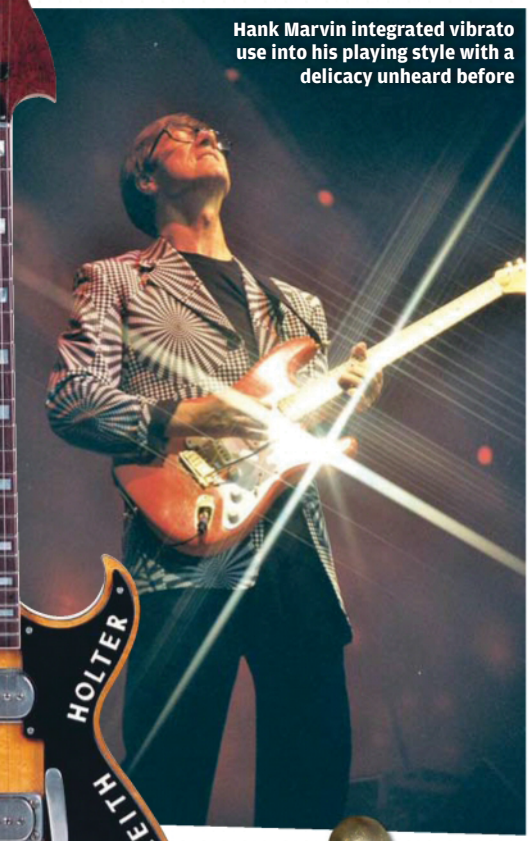
Marvin's Stateside counterpart was Duane Eddy, whose fame straddled the Atlantic. His Bigsby-equipped Gretsch 6120 Chet Atkins, bought when he was 17, was his chosen weapon. 'I got the twang from trying out bass-heavy melodies with thumping vibrato and powerful reverb,' he said recently – and the twang goes on, as he regularly fronts Richard Hawley's band on tour.

But there was another American giant of the era in Lonnie Mack, whose 1963 tune *Wham!* is said to have inspired the term 'whammy bar'. Stevie Ray Vaughan, who regularly played with him, was a fan: 'He holds it while he plays and the sound sends chills up your spine.'

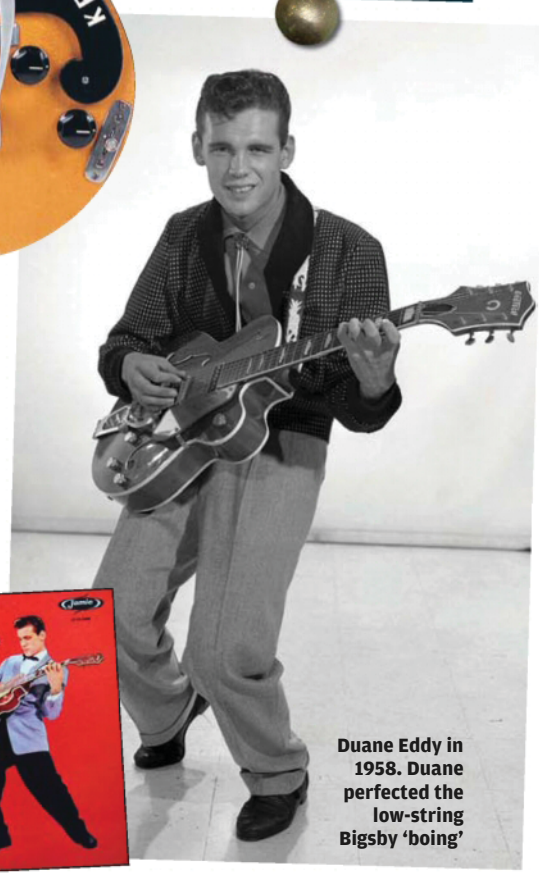
As you'd expect, Gibson were not about to watch main rivals Fender run away with the vibrato market. Gibson's systems were marketed under the name of 'Vibrola'. SG's, Firebirds and some Epiphones were the first guitars to emerge with ➔



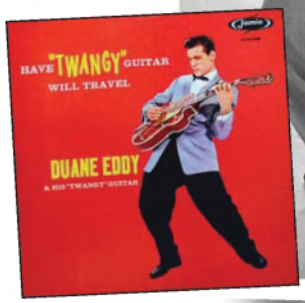
Left, a fine Rickenbacker 325 with Ac'cent vibrato from 1964; right, a Bigsby – with Bigsby! – from around 1953



Hank Marvin integrated vibrato use into his playing style with a delicacy unheard before



Credit: Getty images



Duane Eddy in 1958. Duane perfected the low-string Bigsby 'boing'

1964 Britain's Burns Marvin introduces a knife-edge pivot system based on the Strat design

1964 Fender Dynamic Vibrato introduced on the Mustang

1967 The student model Bronco introduces the Fender vibrato tailpiece (aka steel vibrato)

1979 A locking system with string locks at the nut and saddle is patented by Floyd D Rose

1980s Ned Steinberger offers the TransTrem (transposing tremolo) system

1984 Paul Reed Smith patents his own system

1984 The Kahler tremolo, designed by David Story, is patented

1986 The Fender two-point system with stainless steel block saddles, is introduced on the US Standard Strat

2008 Fender's two-point trem is redesigned with vintage-style bent steel saddles

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Left, a Jazzmaster with locking tremolo button; right, a Gibson SG with 'sideways' Vibrola

these, their flat base making them unsuitable for mounting on the carved-top Les Paul.

The 'sideways' Vibrola of 1963 – which got its name because its tremolo arm moves parallel to the body rather than at right angles to it – was paired with a Tune-o-matic bridge. The pitch-changing mechanism with its piston-like springs was concealed by a cover extending from bridge to strap pin. The Gibson designs did not have the impact or the practicality of the Bigsby and Fender designs, and many guitarists (notably Pete Townshend) removed them, the giveaway being three screw holes in the body.

Not content with giving us the classic 'synchronized tremolo', Fender offered several vibrato variants in the following decades. Advertising copy for the 'floating tremolo', introduced in 1958 on the Jazzmaster, boasted of its 'smooth action', but this was in fact a step backwards. The tremolo arm was attached to a large chrome plate on the front of the body, where the strings were retained by a 'knife plate' tailpiece. There was also a slider that could be locked to keep the guitar in tune in case of string breakage. The floating bridge was, in retrospect, over-engineered, and strings often jumped out of their saddles if played aggressively. The large number of moving parts took its toll on sustain and tone, though surf musicians (and new-wave guitarists when the Jazzmaster and Jaguar came back into vogue in the late '70s) were more concerned with other matters.

Vibrato in the 1960s

The Fender 'dynamic vibrato' was introduced in 1964 on the student-model Fender Mustang. The bridge was integral with the vibrato unit, unlike that of the 'floating tremolo', which was mounted separately, the strings controlled by a tailpiece bar to which the vibrato arm was connected in Bigsby fashion. One final Leo Fender design, the vibrato tailpiece, sometimes known as the Fender steel vibrato, appeared on the Bronco in '67, two years after he sold the company. A cheap, simplified version of the 'synchronized tremolo', it found little acceptance.

The '60s saw Jimi Hendrix, Pink Floyd's David Gilmour and Led Zeppelin's Jimmy Page take the art of vibrato-arm manipulation forward, and all used Fenders to do it. Hendrix was rarely seen without a whammy-equipped Strat, and examples of its (mis)use can be heard on most of his signature tracks.

Gilmour's whammy bar was fixed only to go down, as he preferred to do up-bends with his fretting fingers. And while Page was most often seen on stage with a Les Paul, he was emphatically Stratted-up for *Led Zeppelin III*'s *Since I've Been Loving You*. Deep Purple's Ritchie Blackmore came back from a

➔

SEVENTH HEAVEN! SOME OF THE WHAMMY'S FINEST EXPONENTS

HANK MARVIN

The Fender Stratocaster ordered by Cliff Richard for his backing guitarist direct from the USA changed the course of British music. Shadows maestro Marvin learned to 'hit a note, drop off, and just pull it up... give it a hell of a shake to create a dramatic effect.' That's putting it mildly! Any Shadows hit of the early '60s – *FBI*, *Apache*, *Wonderful Land* – will give a flavour.

DUANE EDDY

The man who put a twang into rock'n'roll with a string of late '50s and early '60s instrumental hits. Using the lower strings of his Gretsch to produce dramatic single-note melodies, he conjured up a sound that made him the most successful solo guitarist in rock history. *Rebel Rouser*, *Forty Miles Of Bad Road*, *Cannonball* and *Shazam* are all required listening.

JIMI HENDRIX

Third album *Electric Ladyland* is a masterclass on the use of the vibrato arm, but if there's one track that truly gives the flavour of Jimi's use of the effect then it's surely his performance of *The Star Spangled Banner* at the Woodstock Festival of 1969. His combination of feedback, vibrato arm manipulation and frantic slurs could be heard as the sound bombs screaming from the sky and exploding as they hit the ground. It's the ultimate electric guitar statement.

JEFF BECK

As an instrumental performer, Beck is a virtuoso at making his guitar 'talk'. Though he blitzed the '60s with a Les Paul, it was a switch to the Strat for 1975's *Blow By Blow* that started a change in technique. He now keeps his hand on the Stratocaster's vibrato arm most of the time while fingerpicking with his thumb and fingers. Examples are many and various, *Where Were You* just one example of his 'vibrato voice'.

EDDIE VAN HALEN

Van Halen unleashed what he calls his 'wiggle stick' on the 1978 instrumental *Eruption*. By the following year's *Van Halen II* album, he'd adopted the Floyd Rose and his vibrato antics were combining with tapping and screaming harmonics to influence a generation of guitarists. His guest solo on Michael Jackson's *Beat It* is still a classic three decades on.

STEVE VAI

Influenced by Frank Zappa, in whose band he featured, Vai used a hammer and screwdriver to chisel out wood behind the bridge of his Charvel so he could pull the bar up further. This extended range can be heard on *The Attitude Song*. Vai also used the bar in combination with a wah-wah pedal to create an almost vocal effect on David Lee Roth's *Yankee Rose*, thereby opening the eyes and ears of many players.

LONNIE MACK

Indiana-born Mack improvised a rockabilly/blues guitar instrumental based on Chuck Berry's *Memphis* in 1963 in dead studio time – and created a US Top 5 hit. Mack's 1958 Flying V, retro-fitted with a Bigsby, was equally prominent on follow-up *Wham!*, the first record Stevie Ray Vaughan ever owned and the number that gave the whammy bar its name. Lonnie still plays today.

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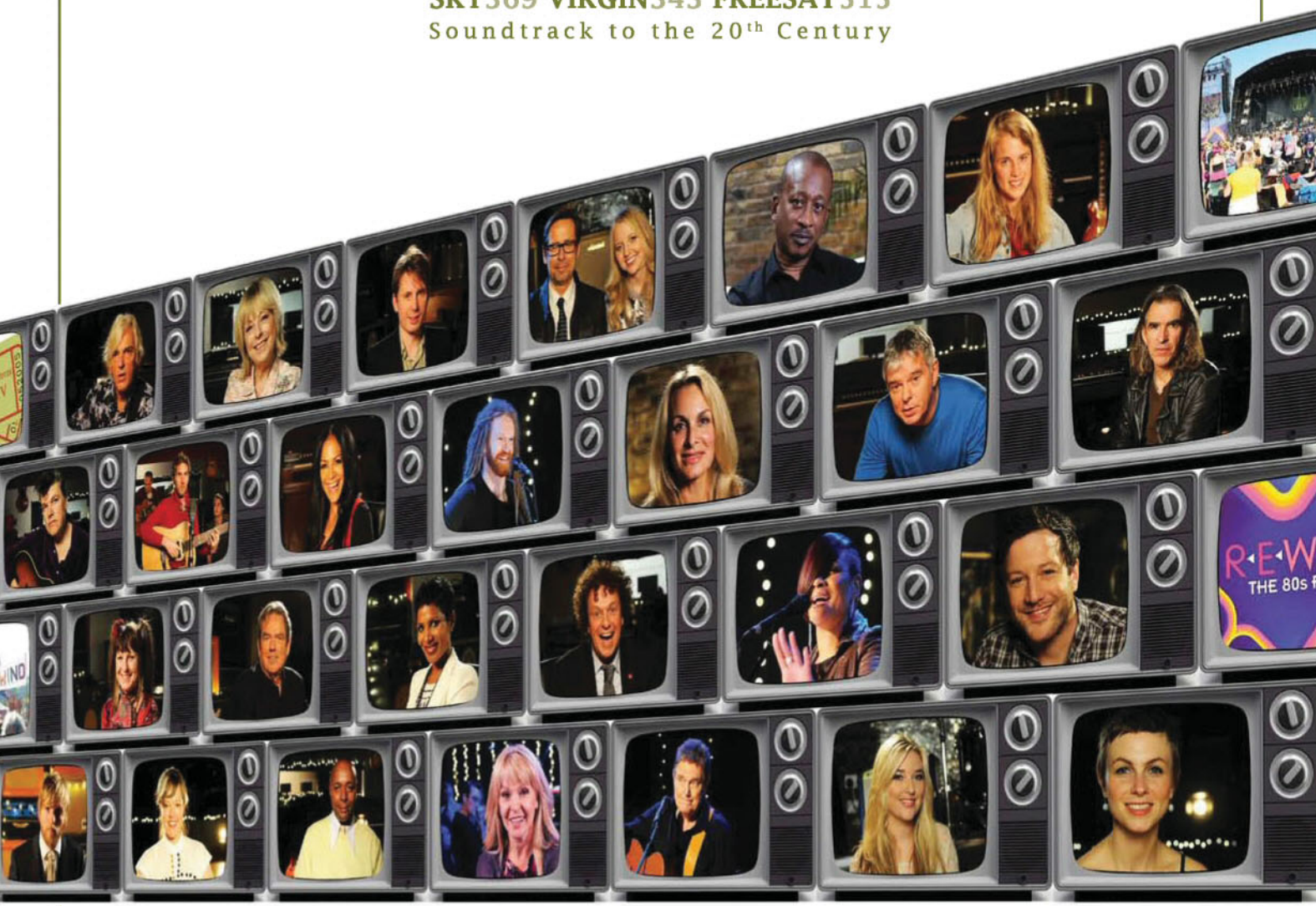
Soundtrack to the 20th Century



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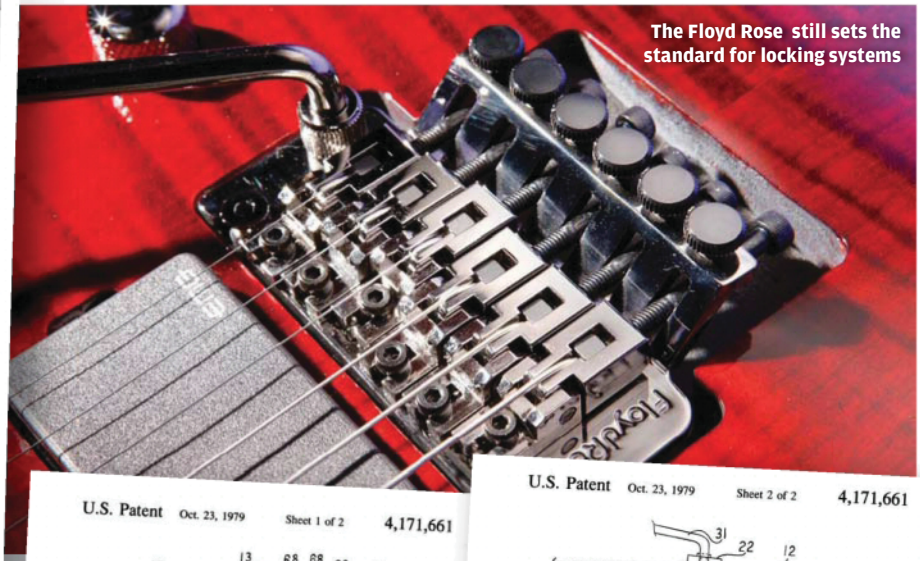
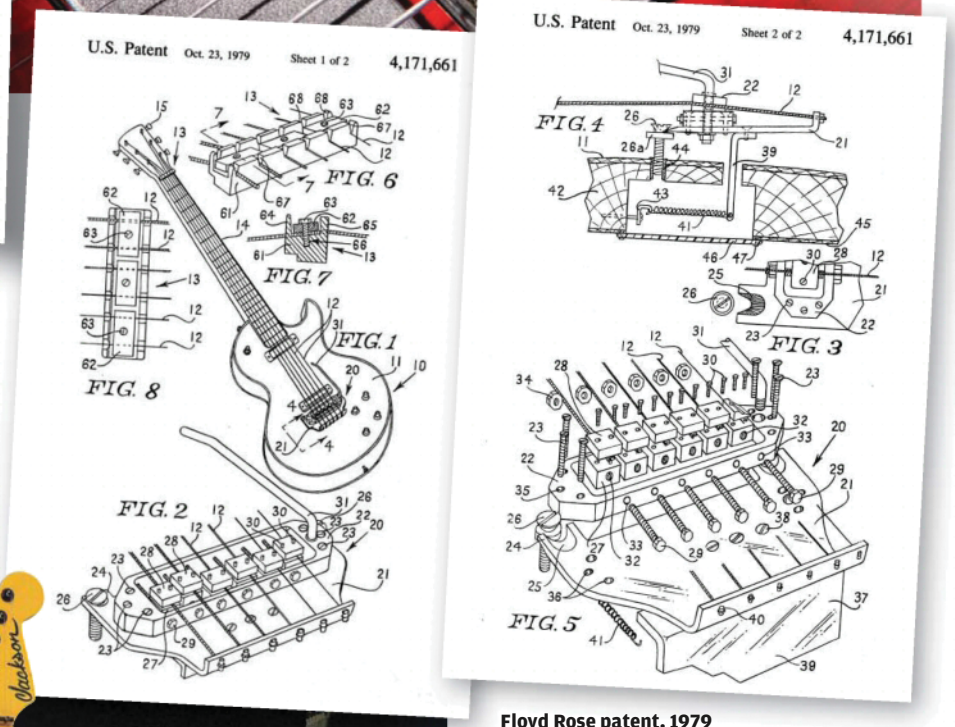
Ritchie Blackmore on stage with Deep Purple, 1970



The Floyd Rose still sets the standard for locking systems



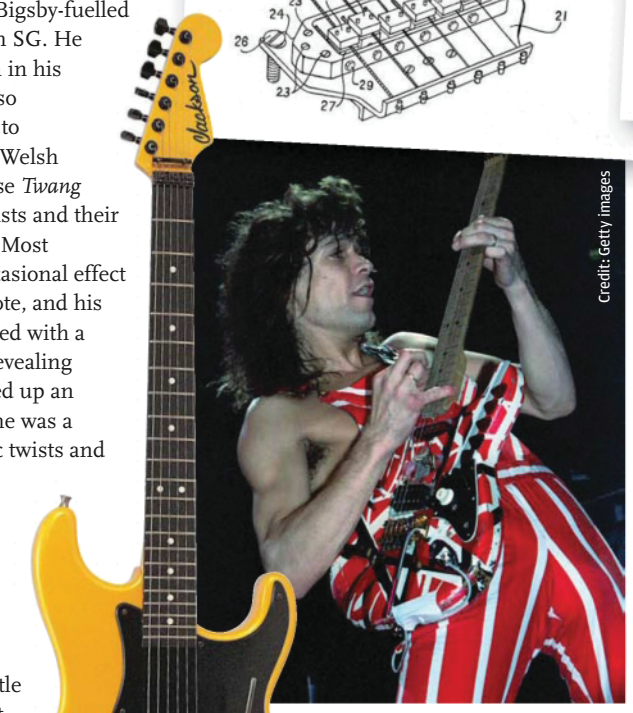
Floyd Rose patent, 1979

Stateside tour in the late '60s raving about the guitarist in the James Cotton Blues Band, whom he'd seen at the Fillmore East. 'Right after seeing him, I started using the bar. Hendrix inspired me, too.' So energetic did Blackmore prove after switching from Gibson ES-335 to Strat that he kept snapping bars, but by 1970's *In Rock* he was hitting top form.

John Cipollina of late-'60s San Francisco psych merchants Quicksilver Messenger Service was renowned for his Bigsby-fuelled vibrato and customised Gibson SG. He claimed he lacked the strength in his fretting hand to bend strings, so developed his right-hand style to compensate. Deke Leonard of Welsh west coast devotees Man, whose *Twang Dynasty* book examines guitarists and their technique, takes up the story: 'Most guitarists use vibrato as an occasional effect but Chippo used it on every note, and his melodic flair was always coupled with a dramatic edge. But the most revealing moments came when he picked up an acoustic. Without a wang bar he was a blues player, with idiosyncratic twists and turns. But the wang bar transferred the blues into the psychedelic realm, giving him the most individualistic guitar sound on the planet.'

Locked out

The '70s saw comparatively little innovation on the vibrato front – but that would change at the end of the decade. The 'locking trem' would become a staple of '80s rock and all its excesses. Eddie Van Halen, the recipient of an early unit from inventor Floyd D Rose in 1979, brought the invention instant recognition. By allowing guitarists to inflict whammy-bar abuse while maintaining tuning, the design combined with amplification advances by the likes of Mesa/Boogie and high-output pickups to shape the decade's music.


Credit: Getty images

1985 Jackson and EVH in 1982

Amateur musician Rose, an accomplished machinist by trade, was inspired to develop his bridge after applying superglue to his Strat's strings after they were tuned to pitch. His heroes were Blackmore and Hendrix, so when he received a positive reaction from Hendrix imitator Randy Hansen, he knew he was on to something. In 1982, Kramer became the exclusive distributor of his 'locking tremolo', its inventor earning a royalty for every unit sold. A Floyd Rose became an essential feature of a Superstrat – the humbucker-equipped hybrid that was taking an increasing share of the market. Unlike conventional bridges, the Floyd Rose asked the user to cut off the ball end, insert the string in a saddle and clamp it in place. Three pieces of metal similarly held a pair of strings apiece at the nut. The headstock tuners then had no effect, fine adjustments being made via tuners at the rear of the bridge. In 1982, Rose and Kramer ➔

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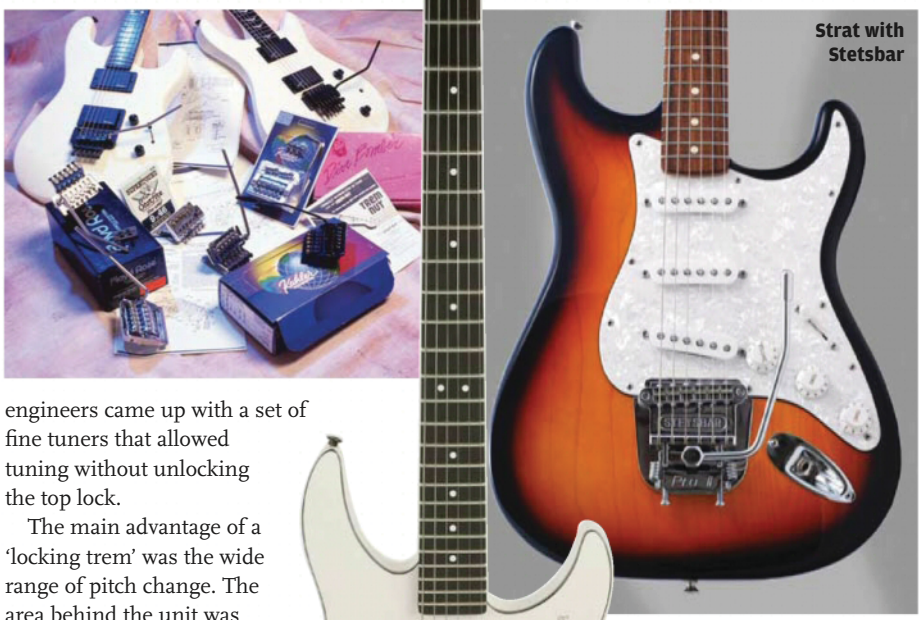


Strat with Stetsbar

engineers came up with a set of fine tuners that allowed tuning without unlocking the top lock.

The main advantage of a 'locking trem' was the wide range of pitch change. The area behind the unit was carved away, permitting huge dives or bends. The disadvantages were the proximity of the bridge tuners to the picking hand, and the length of time it took to change strings; backup guitars were obligatory in case of mid-set breaks.

The '80s saw names like Van Halen, Satriani, Vai, and Hammett take the 'whammy bar' to new heights and depths, the so-called 'dive-bombing' effect becoming a staple of shredding. Without Floyd Rose this would not have been possible. Even Fender capitulated, their US Contemporary Strat of 1989 featuring a locking vibrato system as well as a humbucker. This was superseded in 1992 by the short-lived Floyd Rose Classic Strat. But Fender did innovate in their own right when the two-point system featuring flat stainless steel block saddles was introduced in 1986. They claimed increased stability, a smoother action and less friction, the enemy of vibrato bridges since time began, as six screw pivots gave way to two. In 2008 the two-point system was revamped with vintage-style bent steel saddles.

1984 Steinberger with TransTrem

The Kahler Tremolo System, born in 1979, was Floyd Rose's biggest competitor and shared several design features, but was a cam-based system – the strings attached to a single cylindrical cam inside the bridge housing, like a pedal steel guitar. A patent-infringement judgment went against Gary Kahler, but in 2005 he began making bridges again under license from his former rival.

Headless guitar pioneer Ned Steinberger offered the innovative TransTrem, which kept entire chords in correct pitch during use and let users lock the bridge in six different keys. Jazz-rocker Allan Holdsworth employed this 'transposing tremolo' to obtain sounds similar to a synth's pitchwheel, while in the rock arena Eddie Van Halen used a TransTrem Steinberger GL on his band's '86 album *5150*.

Other cam-driven designs of the time included the Washburn Wonderbar and Stetsbar. The latter, developed by Eric Stets in the late '80s, claimed to retro-fit hard tail, Tele and Strat-style guitars without any mods, new screw holes or woodwork routs.

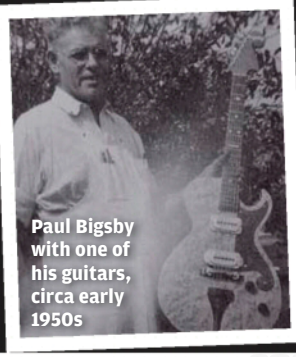
A big part of the vibrato's efficiency comes from what goes on that the other end of the guitar. PRS recognised this, and ignored the locking nut in favour of a friction-reducing graphite-style nut with locking tuners. The result, in 1984, was an enviably slick action. A similar combination of Wilkinson vibrato with Sperzel locking tuners and friction-reducing nut became popular in the '90s as the Floyd Rose dipped in popularity.

The vibrato system still has its heroes. Wilco's Nels Cline and My Bloody Valentine's Kevin Shields are leading lights in the alt. country and indie-rock fields, while Johnny Marr has recently adopted the Jaguar. Doyle Bramhall II and Derek Trucks are keeping the flame alive in the blues realm. The results of the whammy bar's arrival 60 years ago have been more than audible in the music that followed. Some may bless it, others may curse it, but that metal rod lurking within reach of the player's right hand is here to stay.

BIGSBY, BIKES AND THE WHAMMY BAR

Paul Adelburt Bigsby was working as a motorcycle mechanic in the 1940s when country guitar-picker Merle Travis, also a keen biker, asked him to fix a broken Kauffman Vibrola vibrato fitted to a Gibson. Instead, Bigsby designed a whole new system based around a rocker bridge. Not only that, but he turned his engineering skills towards other musical goals: guitars, mandolins and pedal steels all exited his workshop, but he soon had to stop making instruments and concentrate on his most popular creation – the Bigsby vibrato.

On a Bigsby, the strings are attached to a metal bar, to which the tremolo arm is attached. The strings loosen when the arm is pushed forward, and the pitch drops; when released, it returns to its original position thanks to a simple spring. The Bigsby is still popular, particularly on archtop-style guitars whose look it enhances, but is limited compared with more modern designs. As with all spring-loaded systems it suffers from slightly unstable tuning and only really offers the ability to go down in pitch.



Paul Bigsby with one of his guitars, circa early 1950s

Gibson, Gretsch and Guild fans appreciate that the Bigsby can easily be fitted, and is potentially reversible. Gretsch's semi-acoustics were routinely Bigsby-equipped, while it was an option on the likes of the Gibson ES-5 Switchmaster and Epiphone Emperor.

Gibson offered factory Bigsbys on early Les Pauls and the ES series during the '60s and '70s. Keith Richards acquired a sunburst Les Paul with a factory-fitted Bigsby on his first US visit in 1964, while Neil Young's battered Old Black has become his trademark. Steve Hackett and Rush's Alex Lifeson have also used the Les Paul/Bigsby combination.

Paul Bigsby, who encountered poor health in the 60s, sold his company to Gibson in 1966 and passed away two years later. Bigsby was subsequently bought by Gretsch in 1999.

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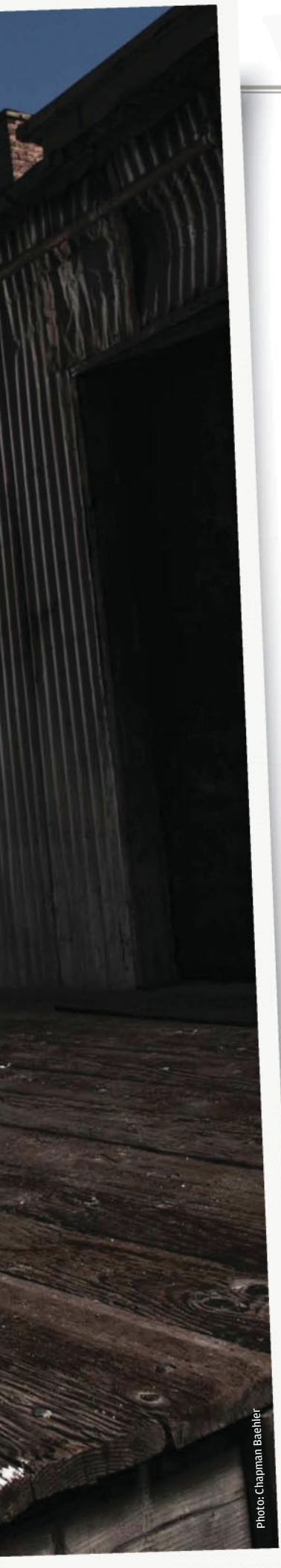
Photo: Chapman Baehler

Mars Rover

On the eve of the release of a career-spanning box set, Joe Satriani gives the inside story on every one of his exploratory albums. Interview by **Steve Bailey**

Instrumental guitar music has been around almost as long as recorded music itself. The lineage runs through Django Reinhardt, Les Paul, Duane Eddy, Jeff Beck, John McLaughlin, even Van Halen's *Eruption* – but the form took perhaps its most unexpected turn in the late 1980s. Joe Satriani was aware from the very beginning that his course was set through uncharted waters, but his second album *Surfing With The Alien* did the unthinkable: it crossed over into the mainstream and brought avant garde guitar weirdness to the pop charts. It's an inspirational tale.

'There were many moments in this strange career where I thought to myself, "You did the weirdest thing possible, and it took off... so go do some more weird stuff!"' muses Satriani. 'It was like, "Hey, no one's ever going to play this stuff on the radio anyway, so let's just do whatever we want". I would bring in a song like *The Enigmatic*, which was based on a scale that no one would ever hum or whistle, but we just happened to be convinced that it was the coolest thing ever.'

One memory stands out for Satriani. It was his first solo tour, and after the initial head-scratching that *Surfing With The Alien* had caused, the album was just starting to break. 'We pulled into Austin, Texas, and went out into the street to look around and soak it all in. I was very excited to be walking down Fourth Street. It's about 2.30am and of course all the clubs are open and music is playing, and I go walking into a 7/11 store to get some supplies, and they're playing *The Enigmatic* over the sound system. That's just the perfect moment of synchronicity. There's a song we thought no one would ever play, would never get used for anything commercially, and there I was in the blues capital of the United States, and they're playing it. People are in there shopping, getting their cigarettes and their beer, and they're not paying much attention. It just kinda blew my mind.'

It's now been almost 30 years since the guitarist in a hard-working but little appreciated San Francisco pop-rock trio called the Squares decided it was time to reinvent himself as a maverick fret-melting troubadour, and 2014, it would seem, is the year to take stock. *Satriani: The Complete Studio Recordings* is a box set that packs all 14 albums plus a disc of unreleased extras. Satriani's co-authored biography with Jake Brown, *Strange Beautiful Music: A Musical Memoir,* will hit the shelves in May, and both in their own way chart one of the most unlikely musical careers ever.

'I was crushed by the cathartic nature of having to write a book and remaster the whole catalogue,' Joe mockingly exclaims. 'It was just too much reflection for one person, but as we wrote the book it came back to me what an absurd series of events it really was.'

It all began in 1984, around Christmas time. Satriani had been grafting for five years in the Squares alongside drummer Jeff Campitelli and Andy Milton on vocals and bass. 'We were sort of like Green Day, or maybe Van Halen and the Everly Brothers mixed together,' he laughs. 'It just never worked... but we tried really hard.'

A spark of inspiration came when doing a spot of dumpster-diving. 'We used to rehearse in this barn, and the Nolo press dumpster – Nolo is a publisher that specialises in do-it-yourself legal guides – was right where we used to hang out to smoke and drink when we took our breaks. I found all these great books about how to start your own business.'

'You did the weirdest thing possible and it took off. So go do some more weird stuff!'

Gear

Guitars
Various Ibanez JS1 signatures, Kramer Pacer, home-made Boogie bodycustoms with interchangeable pickups, Ibanez 'Black Dog' prototype. Also has a '57 Les Paul, a Flying V and a ES-225T

Amps
Marshall JVM410HJS, Peavey JSX

Effects
Boss DS-1, Vox Satriani Big Bad Wah, Vox Satchurator distortion, Vox Time Machine delay and Vox Ice 9 overdrive

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Joe with Donnie F, one of his many Ibanez JS1 models

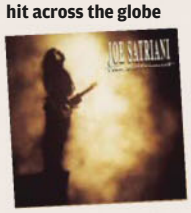
Listen up

JOE SATRIANI
Not Of This Earth (1986)
The debut has fellow Square Jeff Campitelli on drums and includes *The Enigmatic*

JOE SATRIANI
Surfing With The Alien (1987)
The limits of guitar are expanded. *Ice 9* and *Satch Boogie* sit beside the title track

JOE SATRIANI
Flying In A Blue Dream (1989)
18 tracks and Satch sings on six of them – but only when not tapping two-handed

JOE SATRIANI
The Extremist (1992)
Three singles crack the US chart and *Summer Song* becomes a radio hit across the globe



JOE SATRIANI
Time Machine (1993)
The first EP is revived alongside choice live cuts from 1988-1992

The initial idea was that during a break from the band Joe would start his own publishing and record companies. 'Then it was, well, now go and make a record. I had 500 copies pressed of this really weird eponymous EP. There was no drums, bass or keyboards, it was all electric guitar, and I made percussion noises by hitting the pickups and scraping the strings. It was a very avant-garde set of music. I made it even more confusing for people by printing it on a 12" 45rpm disc which most people played at 33rpm. They just thought I was even stranger!

'It seemed like a lark, but I actually started to identify with this solo artist more than with the professional musician who had been breaking his back. I realised a year later I should just make a real record with drums, bass and keyboards. That became *Not Of This Earth*. I knew it wasn't going to be commercial, it was crazy! But I'd realised that doing everything "right" hadn't worked out at all. I thought, I'm getting kind of old now – I should just do it. I was in the mood to take a risk.'

Using a combination of cheques plus a credit card that had arrived in the mail, Joe managed to rustle up $5000 to pre-pay San Francisco's Hyde Street Studios to get the best possible deal. Friend, engineer and producer John Cuniberti lent a guiding hand, as he would throughout Satch's career.

A year was spent recording and trying to get a deal to release the results. After 18 months of nursing a worrying debt, a recommendation from an ex-guitar student of Joe's, Steve Vai, finally persuaded the small imprint Relativity Records to issue the album. Sales were modest, but *Not Of This Earth* shifted enough for Relativity to agree to release another album... if Satriani could self-finance it. Joe still had no money, but he traded session work with Sandy Pearlman who was beavering away on the Blue Oyster Cult's *Imaginos* record – another labour of love that took a whopping eight years to complete – for his own studio time.

'I'd stay there and work for six hours, say until early into the morning, go home, take a shower, eat some breakfast and go back in, and as payment they would let me record some parts for *Surfing*. Even so, we were way over budget. We were flying by the seat of our pants, so a lot of things came together on a whim. We were thinking Relativity would run us out of town when we delivered it. It was all Mötley Crüe, Michael Jackson and Kenny G in the charts; we didn't fit in. It was ridiculous. It was just a dream-come-true recording project.'

Yet release it they did, and Joe was encouraged to take the music out on tour with Stu Hamm on bass and Jonathan Mover on drums. 'It was the last three weeks of January, 1988, and it was not going well. I was in

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Boston heading towards New York, and though the record was actually about to take off, people didn't know what the hell we were doing. We weren't getting good numbers, we were losing money. It was a struggle.'

A twist of fortune was about to give Joe's profile a massive boost exactly when it was needed most. Mick Jagger and his manager Bill Graham were in New York City trying to get Jagger's first solo tour off the ground. Jeff Beck had left the band and around 60 different guitar players had auditioned, but none had fitted the bill. The Squares' old agent Kevin Burns was now working for Bill Graham, and he decided he might as well throw Satch into the mix.

'I got a call from my friend Kevin and he said "You're not going to believe this, but would you like to audition for Mick Jagger?" We just laughed. I thought, I'll never get it... but let's try. I pulled into New York and did the audition, and Mick said "We'd love you to join the band. We're going to Japan and then we're going to Australia. Can you do it?"'

Joe finished his tour with Stu and Jonathan with two last shows in New York at the 400-capacity Bottom Line, and Jagger joined them on stage for a rousing version of *Red House*. 'I was written up by the *Wall Street Journal* and the *New York Times*. I was in *Rolling Stone*. It was just bizarre what was happening all of a sudden. Mick was instrumental in helping me maximise every good thing that happened to me. He gave me a solo spot during his show, he made sure there was always time to do as much press as possible. He really turned out to be a great friend.'

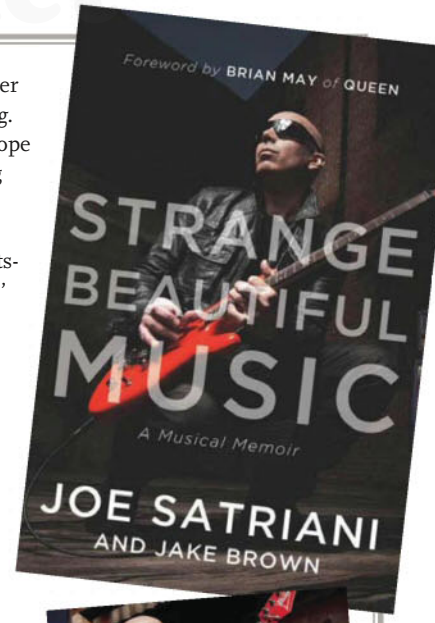
1989's *Flying In A Blue Dream* album capitalised on the success of *Surfing*, and Joe even cracked out his singing skills for six cuts of the 18-track record. Fans, however, remember it most as the beginning of his relationship with Ibanez and the introduction of his famed 'Black Dog' guitar.

'That was the guitar which we hacked up and placed all sorts of parts on to try and make the very first Ibanez JS1 signature model,' Joe explains. 'It became my main guitar for the next couple of records – all of *Flying In A Blue Dream* and half of *The Extremist*. It served very well, but as we progressed, our production models became much better representations of what I was trying to get out of a JS1.'

> *'Sometimes doing something against the grain is exactly what gets you noticed'*

1992's *The Extremist* took things to yet another level, mainly due to the success of *Summer Song*. 'Radio in places like Peru, Japan, and all of Europe played it and it wound up being the best-selling international song I ever had. That album was also a huge departure from the drum-machine driven, carefully-overdubbed, kind of rock-meets-Kraftwerk kind of thing of the first two records.'

Its birth, however, had been traumatic. The first version boasted Simon Phillips on drums, Doug Wimbish on bass and Phil Ashley on keys, but Satch wasn't happy. A second version more akin to the *Surfing With The Alien* sound followed a few months later, but still left him unconvinced. With a whole new band and an old-school co-producer, he finally cracked it. 'I got together with Andy Johns and we did the Bissonette brothers version [with Gregg on drums and Matt on bass]. It was more classic rock sounding with thinner guitars and less careful multi-tracking. It came out just as grunge became the new style, and yet it became part of my signature. Sometimes doing something against the grain is exactly what gets you noticed.'



1993's *Time Machine* was a double disc which brought together some new tracks, material from Satch's first eponymous 12" and live recordings from the previous four years. It could easily have been the solo swansong, as Joe got a very tempting offer just as it was completed. 'I got a call to help Deep Purple out because they had a Japanese tour starting in six days and Ritchie Blackmore had abruptly left the band,' he recalls. 'I did a tour of Japan and a two-month European tour with them in 1994. I declined to join the band full-time because I just thought that it could be the ultimate crutch for the rest of my life. I thought, it's just too early in my life to give this up.'

Satriani was searching for a new sound, and there was soon to be a seismic shift. 'We started to work on the record that would become *Crystal Planet* with John Cuniberti engineering and Jeff Campitelli on drums, but it kind of fell apart. I didn't feel like it was happening.' Glyn Johns – brother of Andy Johns, and famed Rolling Stones engineer – was called in, and ➔

Satch Boogie Boards

Joe Satriani has long been associated with Ibanez, but before the famed Black Dog and the JS1 series were bedded in, his first two albums saw him searching for his signature sound.

'Right towards the end of the Squares I picked up a strange Kramer Pacer,' Joe recalls. 'A mutt, I like to call it, because I think the guys at Guitar Center had put it together from leftover bits of Kramers – it had different hardware and some odd pickups.' For his first eponymous 12" he still found use for his '54 hardtail Strat and a Les Paul Deluxe alongside the Kramer, but two guitars he'd made himself were soon superseding them. 'They were basically Stratocasters. They had hardrock maple Boogie bodies and I had different pickguards with various pickups, like two humbuckers or three single coils or some other experiments that we tried. When I went in to do *Not Of This Earth* I basically was using those, and we would slowly mod the Pacer. I remember we went from a regular Floyd Rose to a fine-tuner Floyd Rose.'

All the chopping and changing took its toll on the soft Kramer body. 'We had to keep replacing the holes where the bridge would screw into the body. You make a bigger hole, put a hard wood dowel in, and then re-screw the bridge. We must have done it two or three times.'

The Kramer was definitely on the way out, and by the time *Surfing*... came along Joe had replaced it with another inexpensive Pacer. 'It was black with a maple neck and three single coils. This thing was ridiculous. It was like it had been put together by a lunatic. I mean, you couldn't operate the bar and the volume control at the same time. But it was the thinnest, most trebly guitar ever, and I used it for songs that needed just that super-clean tone. For *Ice 9*, it was the perfect guitar.'

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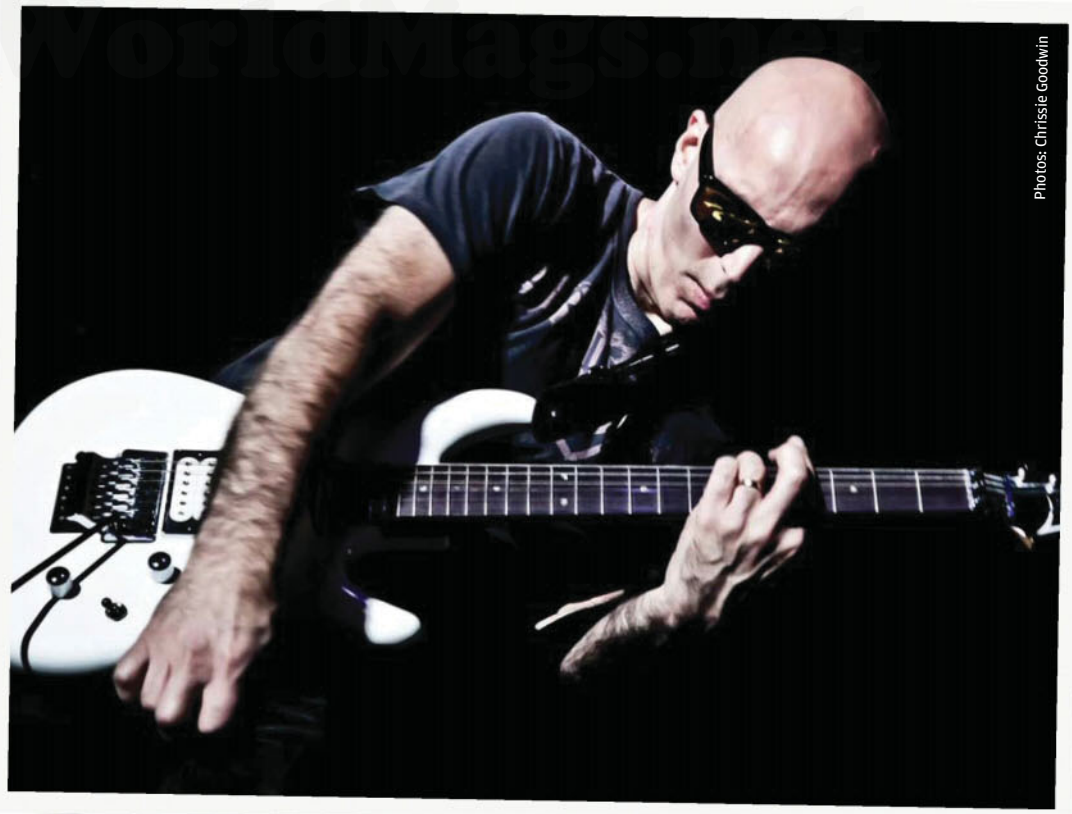
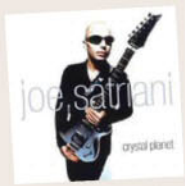

Photos: Chrissie Goodwin

Listen up

JOE SATRIANI
Joe Satriani (1995)
Cool #9 **and** ***Luminous Flesh Giants*** **grace a nod to classic rock**

JOE SATRIANI
Crystal Planet (1998)
A new Satch era embraces electronica and shows renewed experimentation



JOE SATRIANI
Engines Of Creation (2000)
Recorded in a living room with Logic and Pro Tools, Satriani goes all techno on us

JOE SATRIANI
Strange Beautiful Music (2002)
Joe commits further to pushing limits with the use of Pro Tools

JOE SATRIANI
Is There Love In Space (2004)
Contains ***I Could Fly,*** **spookily echoed by Coldplay's later #1 hit** ***Viva La Vida***

he inspired 1995's loose, bluesy *Joe Satriani* album. 'Glyn said, "I think you need to do something totally different and forget about all these songs". The album wound up being about 85 per cent brand new, recording live in the studio with Manu Katché [drums], Andy Fairweather Low [guitar] and Nathan East [bass]. There were still remnants of the original sessions, so it's a bit of a hybrid. The record started out in a very different way. When the box set comes out people will hear the original versions of *Cool #9* and *Luminous Flesh Giants* which show where I was really heading.'

Satriani's attention may well also have been diverted through this time by his efforts to get the very first G3 tour off the ground. These jaunts have become legendary, but Joe really had to battle to make the original tour happen.

> *'Each song on Crystal Planet began in an ascending key. Nobody picked up on that!'*

'The managers were like, "My artist isn't gonna be on stage next to *that* guy!" and the promoters would say "I'm not gonna pay all three of you guys on one night" – it worked better for them financially if we came a month apart. We had to convince everyone that there was a special quality to this coming together that would supersede the normal expectations.'

There was also the fear of being 'shredded' to deal with. 'The guys would all say the same thing, which was "What? We're gonna do, like, duelling solos?" It was an irrational fear that your audience would give up on you if you put a foot wrong. I knew that wasn't the case. They want to see their favourite players interact with each other and play something unexpected, they want to see them react off the cuff. It did eventually happen in October of '96, and it was a fantastic set of gigs.'

By 1997 the *Crystal Planet* project had been revived and a whole new Satriani era was upon us. The new sound came complete with a new image: Joe's flowing locks had been chopped in favour of a shaved head and wraparound sunglasses. 'Around that time electronic music was making headway, and I was exposed to a lot of it when I travelled, especially in Europe. It was the first record where I made no audio demos. I wrote everything on simple notepaper, not even manuscript, just using a battery-powered metronome.

'The first time we heard the music was as a rough trio playing in a rehearsal room. That changed our perception about where the music could go. By the time we got into the Plant Studios I had brought in Eric Caudieux, and I asked him to create techno versions of the songs that we would listen to in our headphones when we tracked live as a trio. So what is on the record is a band playing along to techno tracks that the audience never actually heard. When you have 20 or 30 tracks of stuff gurgling and bumping and clicking behind you, you kind of relax a bit! I needed that to be able to play those melodies and it allowed me to be a lot more expressive... otherwise, I think I would have over-played.'

Joe was bowled over with the results. 'I thought my playing bumped up. There were concepts harmonically that were just giant steps. I even arranged the sequence of the record so that each new song began in an ascending key. Of course, nobody picked up on that! There's so many levels of that record that were cool.'

By 2000, with *Engines Of Creation*, he was ready to take the concept a step even further. 'I presented Sony Music with a choice. I said, "Look, I can do a rock record, a classical record with electric guitar on top, or I can do a techno record". They all voted for techno.

'I wrote a lot of stuff on MIDI keyboards and everything was recorded DI. We had such a good time recording in a living room, using Logic and Pro Tools, just breaking all the rules. Everything was smooth sailing until they tried to put the tracks to radio.

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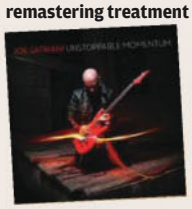
Listen up

JOE SATRIANI
Super Colossal (2006)
Satriani plays keys, bass, in fact everything except the drums

JOE SATRIANI
Professor Satchafunkilus & The Musterion Of Rock (2008)
Title and content offer plenty to chew on; Joe says *Musterion* is 'the weirdest song ever'

JOE SATRIANI
Black Swans And Wormhole Wizards (2010)
His Chickenfoot supergroup duties couldn't keep Joe from the day job

JOE SATRIANI
Unstoppable Momentum (2013)
In the spirit of completeism, even last year's album release receives the full remastering treatment



They came back and said "Oh my God, no one will play anything. The techno community hates guitar, and the rock radio won't touch techno. Uh... do you want to do some rock mixes?"'

Despite these troubles Satriani's live tours were still packing audiences in and he felt confident enough to continue on his journey of sonic exploration. '*Strange Beautiful Music* and *Is There Love In Space* – those records kinda go together with the previous two. They show a sort of relaxing, not worrying so much about commercialism, the dropping of some chains, and me allowing myself to be a little bit more expressive.'

What's more, a track from *Is There Love In Space, If I Could Fly,* later became strangely commercial in highly controversial style when Satch brought a lawsuit against Coldplay due to its similarities with the band's 2008 *Viva La Vida* single, which went to #1 in both the UK and the USA. The sides are believed to have settled out of court. 'All I can say is "no comment",' smirks Satriani.

> *'In the '60s everything was turned into mono. Our horror story has been the MP3'*

All the same, this supreme guitar melodicist remains unconvinced that guitar can capture the public imagination in the same way as a vocal. 'It's a difficult business trying to make an electric guitar sound lyrical enough, because you're always one phrase away from overdoing it or one phrase away from under-doing it. I can't judge anymore. As Glyn Johns once said to me in the heat of a studio moment in his wonderful accent, "It's not your job to decide what people will like... just go out there and play your bloody guitar!"'

Recent albums *Super Colossal* (2006), *Professor Satchafunkilus And The Musterion Of Rock* (2008) and *Black Swans And Wormhole Wizards* (2010) all get the remastering treatment on the new box set, as does even last year's *Unstoppable Momentum*. 'When you live through a couple of decades of making records, you begin to realise that the process of mastering is where the most anxiety from the artist and the record company really comes down to bear,' Satriani ponders. 'Whatever the most popular thing in the world at that moment is, you will be pressured into mastering the record to fit in. All the original master tapes are heavy with that kind of release anxiety. What we did with the box set was free ourselves of all those concerns. They've already been released in their own times and they were mastered to compete – and that is the word they use – with what was happening on radio.

'The main thing about the box set is that it was the right time to rescue of all the albums from the previous technological shortcomings. We elevated the sound of all the records and brought them to life. We've allowed them to have their dynamic range!'

The box set is being released in two forms: alongside the remastered CD set there is also a limited run of USB drives which boast studio-quality 24-bit 96kHz sound. 'If you've got something like a 96k Pro Tools system you'll be able to hear exactly what we heard in the studio,' explains Joe. 'In the '70s you couldn't release a 24-track two-inch tape to hear records the way they actually sounded to the artists – they were always squished. The '60s were worse; everything was turned into mono.

'Of course our horror story has been the MP3. Free music has been great, but it's been crap. When you talk about free MP3s floating around, it's the McDonalds of music. It's really just cheese burgers and fries out there. It's depressing for a musician who spends a fortune to create a beautiful-sounding project only to have it squished, stomped on and played through ear buds.'

To a large degree, this has propelled the whole box set project. 'I know there's a only limited group of wonderful fans that will shell out to buy the 96k music files, but artistically I feel vindicated that I can release it, that it exists and people will finally get to hear all the brilliant work done by John Cuniberti, Glyn and Andy Johns and everybody else in all its glory.'

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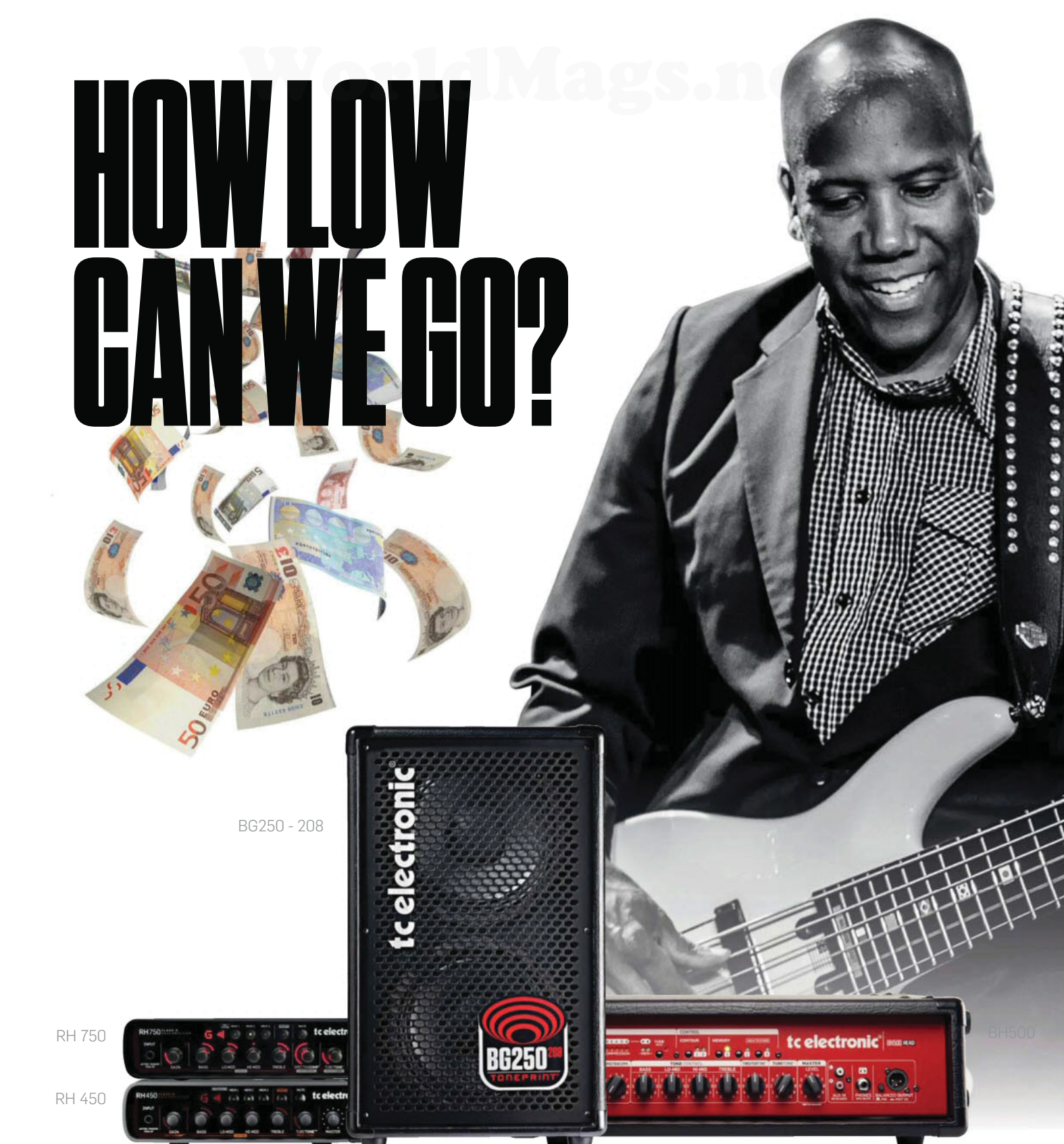

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True Blue

A new four-CD box set takes a fresh look at the distinguished six-decade career of the Mississippi-born, Texas-raised blues rock guitarist Johnny Winter. Interview by **Michael Heatley**

Johnny Winter has proved himself both prolific and creative in a career that kicked off in the early '60s and as yet shows little sign of slowing down. His musical legacy is now spread across six decades, and the man who celebrated his 70th birthday this February with a fitting all-star bash at BB King Blues Club in New York City seems set to emulate the blues legends that first inspired him by continuing to go on playing to a ripe old age.

Not that old age always looked to be on the cards. Johnny, a white-haired albino who, along with multi-instrumentalist brother Edgar, cuts an instantly recognisable figure, has experimented with forbidden fruit during his spell at the top and was fortunate to survive a heroin habit. Returning in 1973 with the appropriately-titled *Still Alive And Well,* he confirmed his renaissance in the '80s with a trio of albums on US blues label Alligator. These are as essential to any collection as his late '60s/early'70s output on Blue ↦

Gear

Guitar
Dean Zelinsky Private Stock signature

Amp
Music Man 4x10

Effects
'I just use a chorus pedal; that makes it a little more heavy.'

FIREBIRDS, LAZERS AND DEANS

Winter is synonymous with the reverse Gibson Firebird, a guitar as visually distinctive as the man himself. His adoption of a twin-pickup Firebird V from 1963, the model's year of introduction, brought the initially unpopular design a belated share of the spotlight. He removed the tremolo, changed the tailpiece and selected a high action to facilitate string-bending and slide. The Gibson 2008 Custom Shop replica copied every detail, including a mended headstock, cigarette burns and a chip in the pickguard.

In recent years he's used a headless, small-bodied Erlewine Lazer, but this has now been replaced by a Dean Zelinsky Private Label signature model whose elaborately carved top is reminiscent of a Zemaitis. Winter was designer Zelinsky's idol back in the day, and the quest to recruit him as an endorsee was clearly personal. 'This guy's been trying to make me a guitar for the past couple of years,' says Winter, 'but he couldn't get it right. Now he's got it right. It has got real nice pickups.'

His choice of amp, a Music Man 4x10 combo, has remained constant since his mid-'70s spell backing Muddy Waters. 'It's a great amp. Its quite old but I love it. When I played with Muddy, [producer] Bob Margolin let me try his and I liked it a lot, so I bought one.'

Photo: Courtesy of Susan Winter Nelson

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Caption ??????????????? ??????????????????????

Sky (through CBS/Sony), which still represents his best-known work.

But first, let's backtrack to 22 February 1944, when John Dawson Winter III was born in Leland, Mississippi. The first son of John and Edwina Winter, he was quick to follow his parents' musical leanings. 'My mother played piano and my father played sax and banjo,' he recalls. ' I can remember daddy teaching me old standards like *Bye Bye Blackbird* and *Ain't She Sweet* when I was very young. '

The ukulele quickly gave way to the guitar. Younger brother Edgar in turn picked up the piano and saxophone with the result that, as the pair entered their teens in Beaumont, Texas, they teamed up in a number of local groups.

The softly-spoken Winter recalls growing up in Texas as a musical education in itself. 'I listened to blues from the age of around 12,' he explains. 'Before that it was pretty much country music, which was about the only thing you could hear round there. I loved the blues as soon as I heard it.' He learned to play fingerstyle – the chosen technique of country pickers like Merle Travis and Chet Atkins – from a local music-store employee named Luther Nallie. Winter still uses a thumbpick and, though he felt this slowed him down, it has become a trademark.

Winter also investigated slide guitar early in his career, trying to figure out how pioneer bluesmen Robert Johnson and Elmore James created their eerie sound. After knives, lipstick holders and even watch crystals had been found wanting, he went to a local plumbing store and had some pieces of steel pipe cut to length, creating the slide he still uses today.

Bands like Johnny & The Jammers, the Crystaliers and the Black Plague all proved early stepping-stones towards a full-time career in music, and Winter's first recording session coming in 1960 courtesy of a minor Houston label named Dart. Subsequent releases surfaced through many outlets, notably the Home Cookin' label, much of them produced by local magnate Roy C Ames.

A turning point came in 1962 when Winter went to see BB King at a club in Beaumont called the Raven – and ended up playing with him. 'I was 17. That was thrilling, really thrilling. He didn't know if I could even play – I was young and he hadn't seen me before. I couldn't believe it when he let me. I think, in his place, I wouldn't have let somebody play if I didn't know if they could play or not. It was really nice of him. Nowadays I don't let anybody play with me unless I know they can play!'

Winter remained a strictly local phenomenon until, in early 1968, he hooked up with drummer 'Uncle' John Turner in Houston. Turner urged him to leap on the blues-rock bandwagon created by Eric Clapton, Jimi Hendrix and Mike Bloomfield, a pal from Chicago. 'We weren't particularly influenced by Hendrix and Cream,' considers Winter. 'We shared that common ground before we ever heard their records... their success gave us the encouragement to do it.'

Recruiting bassist Tommy Shannon, they became the resident trio at a club called the Vulcan Gas Company in Austin, Texas. Money was tight and they had to sleep on floors – but when *Rolling Stone* came calling, the situation changed overnight. The magazine's rave review described Winter as 'a cross-eyed albino with long, fleecy hair who plays some of the gutsiest, fluid blues you've ever heard' and soon record company A&R men were flocking to Austin to check him out. 'Yeah, that really made my career,' Winter confirms. Since then, unlike many artists, he's read every review he's had. 'I do read 'em – I read everything I can.'

The coup de grace came when Winter sat in with pal Mike Bloomfield at New York's Fillmore East in late 1968 and stunned audience, musicians and critics alike with his uninhibited performance. 'The first time I met Mike,' he explains, 'was when I was playing in Chicago in 1963. He had a coffee house going, the Fickle

WINTER AT WOODSTOCK

Johnny Winter was a regular performer at the massive festivals of the '60s and early '70s. A blistering version of the Woodstock *Leland Mississippi Blues* appears on his *True To The Blues* box set, though he wasn't included in the movie that made so many of the acts famous 'because [manager] Steve Paul thought we wouldn't make any money.'

And what is his main memory from that famous weekend in '69? 'It was a mess!' Winter laughs. 'It was all muddy and raining. It didn't rain when we played, but there was mud everywhere. It was still a great experience, though. We flew over in a helicopter to get there, so we saw all the people and we knew it was going to be huge.'

The Atlanta Pop Festival of 1970 yields three tracks, all new to CD – *Mean Mistreater* and the previously unreleased *Eyesight To The Blind* and *Prodigal Son*. 'Atlanta was nice,' he says of the event. 'I was on with the Allman Brothers, who are favourites of mine. I love the Allmans.'

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Photo: Courtesy of Mark Temme

Winter with his current powerhouse band, Tommy Curiale (drums) Scott Spray (bass) and Paul Nelson (guitar)

Listen up

JOHNNY WINTER
True To The Blues: The Johnny Winter Story
(2014)
With 56 tracks from no less than 27 different albums that trace his recording career from 1969 to date, this is the ultimate Johnny Winter collection

MUDDY WATERS
Hard Again
(1977)
The first of three studio collaborations with Muddy Waters won Winter a Grammy award back in 1977 and is 'my favourite of all of them'

JOHNNY WINTER
Guitar Slinger
(1984)
Winter's debut for Alligator, his first album of new material for four years, still snaps and sparkles both vocally and instrumentally

And another thing...

Johnny played no part whatsoever in choosing the music for his box set. 'Sony did the whole thing, but they did a good job. They wanted to do it, so they didn't give me any choice!'

Pickle, and they had old blues guys coming in. I had a night off so I went and played there, jammed with him.

'He remembered me and, five years later, he was playing the Fillmore with Al Kooper. I asked if I could play; he said sure. Mike was always great to me. Real nice guy.' Bloomfield introduced Johnny as 'From Texas, he's the baddest motherfucker, man!' before his guest delivered a fabulous 11-minute version of BB King's *It's My Own Fault,* as featured on the box set.

Signing one of the largest recording contracts ever offered a solo performer, his breakthrough record came in 1969 with *Johnny Winter,* an album he still rates 'one of my special favourites'. It sold a more than handy 200,000 copies and peaked at #24 in the Billboard chart.

> *'I love to play – we do 100 dates a year. But I play sitting down. It's just easier'*

Winter has never been a prolific writer, tending to mix self-penned selections with material from acknowledged masters: covers of songs by Chuck Berry, Little Richard and Bob Dylan appeared on 1970's *Second Winter,* an album which saw him moving away from the blues and towards rock. An earlier recording, *The Progressive Blues Experiment,* cut live in an Austin nightclub without an audience and released on a rival label, portrayed him in bluesier vein with fewer rough edges smoothed down, and this also made the Top 40.

As the move towards rock continued, Winter's rhythm section was cut loose and Ohio band the McCoys (of *Hang On Sloopy* fame) were recruited and rechristened Johnny Winter And. Their young guitarist Rick Derringer struck up a prolific partnership with the main man, his composition *Rock And Roll, Hoochie Koo* even getting Johnny on mainstream FM radio.

'Rick's a great player,' Johnny reflects, 'but [1971's] *Johnny Winter And/Live* is a record I don't really like. We kind of stepped on each other. I'd be playing and he'd be playing at the same time. It was my biggest-selling record, but it's the one I like the least. I like the Johnny Winter And band, but *And/Live* was kinda sloppy. A lot of people love it, though. It was the only gold record I ever got!'

After Winter came out the other side of his previously mentioned personal problems, he shunned the rock'n'roll lifestyle and got back to his roots. As he now sees it, Johnny the bluesman and Johnny the rocker are two sides of the same personality, 'but I like the blues better. Rock'n'roll... I like Jerry Lee Lewis, Little Richard, Chuck Berry – that was the best. I don't like the modern rock so much, but the old stuff was great.'

The catalyst for his re-embracing the blues roots of his youth was the legendary Muddy Waters, whose career Johnny Winter helped revive by producing a series of late '70s albums. 'I loved playing with Muddy, it was just great. It really helped his career, and was a whole lot of fun for me.' Did Johnny choose the material? 'No, Muddy chose the songs he wanted to play.' Sadly, only one Waters/Winter track, a live version of Guitar Slim's *I Done Got Over It,* featuring harmonica player James Cotton, is on the new box set *True To The Blues: The Johnny Winter Story.*

Muddy Waters died in 1983, and Johnny reclaimed the solo spotlight a year later with *Guitar Slinger,* the first album of a trio cut for Alligator. Did he feel he had to prove himself anew? 'Sure – you have to keep doing that. But that's okay, I don't mind.'

He is known for his incessant touring, and a lot of material on the box is recorded live. 'I love to play,' he confirms. 'We do about 100 dates a year. I have my own bus now; we bought it a few months ago.' These days, however, he takes the weight off his feet. 'I play mostly sitting down. It's just easier.'

Asked which he has worked on most, singing or playing, Johnny fires back immediately; 'I don't have to work on my singing at all; I've been doing it for 60 years!' Aerosmith's Steven Tyler has gone on record as rating him 'pound for pound, the greatest rock'n'roll singer ever'. Would he agree with that? Winter pauses, chuckles, then responds: 'Yeah, yeah – I would!'

Winter's next record, *Step Back,* will be a reprise of the all-star formula that characterised 2011's *Roots.* 'It's all the old songs I played when I first got into music, and a lot of guests: Eric Clapton, Doctor John, Mark Knopfler.' Is there anyone he'd have liked to have worked with in his career but, as yet, hasn't? 'James Burton, who used to play with Ricky Nelson and Elvis. And Elvis's first guitar player, Scotty Moore. Scotty's sadly got arthritis now, and he's not playing any more.'

Another unfulfilled ambition is to get into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. 'I'd like that... it would mean something,' he admits. And as for his future? 'I'm gonna keep doing the same thing as long as I'm healthy.' Rock on, Johnny Winter.

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Side Effects

Waddy Wachtel has long been the chosen guitarist for LA's rock royalty, always doing the perfect thing in the perfect place. **Steve Bailey** hears of his life and times and the search for the perfect Les Paul...

For those in the know, Waddy Wachtel was considered the go-to guitar man throughout the '70s and '80s on the US West Coast session scene. His innate musicality and an instinctive feel for exactly what is required has enhanced countless hit records. Gutsy rhythm, searing leads and exquisite slide are all Wachtel specialities. Alongside a crack team that often included bassist Leland Sklar, drummer Russell Kunkel and keysman Craig Doerge, Wachtel quietly helped sculpt the sound of a musical era. Jackson Browne, Carole King, Stevie Nicks, James Taylor, Warren Zevon and many more all benefited, and the best LA producers all knew that if their session was lacking a certain something they could call on Wachtel and his famed Bigsby-equipped 1960 Les Paul Standard to provide it. In a documentary, *King Of The Sidemen*, his fellow X-pensive Wino Keith Richards sings Wachtel's praises. 'He's a natural maestro. I envy him, to be honest. He can take a song to further heights, beyond expectations.'

Even at a young age, Waddy seemed to have the ability to inspire a little bit of magic in fellow musicians. He grew up in New York where he and his brother were raised by their father; his mother tragically passed away when Waddy was very young.

'My mum died when I was six,' Wachtel says, 'but I remember when I was five she was standing right there with me and there was this big band playing on television. They cut to this guy chomping away on this white guitar, and I was hypnotised. I just said, "That's what I want to do." She went, "What are you talking about? You're five years old!"'

The obsession stuck. Waddy drove his father 'nuts' for years until finally he gave in and bought an exquisite f-hole Gibson L-7 for his nine year-old son. Two years later, Waddy first witnessed a Les Paul – a black Custom model belonging to a worker at the summer camp attended by the Wachtel brothers. Even at 11 years old, he knew he couldn't rest until he owned one. His father – who made a modest living from the family shoe shop – wouldn't budge but, encouraged by his mischievous grandmother, Waddy wrote to 'Uncle Harry', a pal of his dad's who had become a successful real estate developer, explaining that a black Les Paul might just make his life complete. A few days later Waddy was summoned to the back room of the family store.

'My dad comes in and he just starts wailing on me. "Did you write a letter to your Uncle Harry behind my back embarrassing me?" He's like slamming on me with the words, but as he's yelling I see the head of a brown guitar case in the corner. I go, "What are you yelling at me for, and what is that in the corner?" It wasn't black, so I was of course let down... it was what they call the TV model – yellow with a double cutaway and a P90 – but it was a Les Paul. I was thrilled!'

The easy-going Wachtel has a perceptive way with people and a knack of falling in with individuals who can profit from his talents. This manifested itself early on. 'We lived in this complex, and one day I heard a guitar coming out of one of the apartments opposite. I'm Colombo-ing my way around the floors; finally I bang on the door and this heavy-set guy opens the door. I say, "You playing guitar in here?" He goes "Yeah?" I say, "I'm Bobby Wachtel and I think I can help you." He says, "I'm Leslie Weinstein," and so we met and kinda fell in love with each other.' Leslie Weinstein became Leslie West, and Waddy's guitar lessons paid off. Waddy also sold him his Gibson TV, and West became one of the most famous Les Paul Junior players on the planet.

> *"He said, I got a million dollars. You wanna to come with me? I said "Absolutely"'*

'The Beatles had come out and they all had these big old Gretsches and Rickenbackers... so I got myself a Country Gentleman,' continues Wachtel. Gretsch in hand, the young Waddy found gigs in New York and further afield in Newport, Long Island and beyond, but by the late '60s his career was stagnating.

But then he got a break. 'Someone said "Have you heard the Cowsills?" I went, what's a Cowsill? It was a family: four brothers, the little sister, and the mother. They were babies, but their singing was incredible. They did the best Beatles covers. The dad, Bud, was their manager and the worst miserable alcoholic showbiz father ever. He wanted to manage me. I said, you're out of your mind. He said his kids were gonna make it; I said, well, with you, I doubt it. I was stuck in Vermont with my band – Twice Nicely – and he called again. They had a record deal. He said, "I got a million dollars. You wanna come with me?" I said "Absolutely. Get me out of here." We all moved to LA.' ↠

Gear

Guitars

1960 Gibson Les Paul with Bigsby, goldtop Les Paul sprayed white with Bigsby and a tiny mystery preamp. Sunburst 1957 Fender Stratocaster, 1963 rosewood-board Stratocaster

Amps

Most of Waddy's most revered session work was done with a Music Man 210HD One-Thirty

Effects

None whenever possible, but Wachtel is famed for his use of a volume pedal – a DeArmond or a Goodrich – to create a pedal steel effect with to help of his Bigsby

And Another Thing...

Wachtel is naturally left-handed but learned to play right-handed at the insistence of his first teacher. Later on he also studied for a year with renowned guitar tutor and jazz guitarist Sal Salvador

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Wachtel on his famed 1960 LP on stage with Keith Richards' X-pensive Winos: 'The best band I've ever played with'

Photos: Paul Nakin/Archive/Getty

Listen up

KEITH RICHARDS
Talk Is Cheap (1988)
Keith told Waddy 'I'm putting a band together and you're in it'

WARREN ZEVON
Excitable Boy (1978)
Waddy worked with Zevon for years, even co-writing the classic *Werewolves Of London*

STEVIE NICKS
Bella Donna (1981)
Waddy played on the first 1973 Buckingham Nicks LP and has been on every solo record

LINDA RONSTADT
Hasten Down The Wind (1976)
Waddy's work on Linda's million-sellers put him on the map

RANDY NEWMAN
Little Criminals (1977)
Check out *Rider In The Rain* to hear Waddy's famed Bigsby-aided pedal steel imitation

Waddy wrote and produced for the Cowsills, but soon began to experience the pitfalls of Mr Cowsill's management. 'He would blow every deal! I mean, Ahmet Ertegun [legendary Atlantic Records honcho] called our house and I could hear my demo playing in the background, and he said he loved it. It was fantastic, but Bud, who was greedy, would always demand too much. You know *The Partridge Family*? That show was written for the Cowsills. Bud said "You can't do this show without me!" and they went, "You know what? Yes, we can." So he blew their best deal.' The one upside; in LA Wachtel took in a Frank Zappa gig and was hugely impressed with the sound Zappa got from his Gibson Super 400, and convinced the wayward manager he needed one. 'That was the one thing I got out of Bud... aside from screwed, I got a good Gibson.'

> *'It was an incredible time to be in Los Angeles. It was our Liverpool. It was an explosion'*

His taste for Gibsons restored, it was short step back to the charms of the Les Paul and this time it would prove to be lifelong. 'It was 1968, and my band had been in LA for months. All we did was sit around, write and rehearse. We never did any shows. At first we were the only people rehearsing in this place. Then Crosby, Stills and Nash took the other room, so we got to know each other. Then Neil Young came down too. We couldn't believe it... we were green as a cucumbers!

'One day I walked into their room and there was a circle of every kind of guitar you could want in there, including a ton of Gibsons. I decided I was missing the Les Paul, so I just said "Would you guys be interested in selling one of those?" Stephen said "Yeah, man, sure. Take your pick."

'It came down to a choice of Neil's three-pickup Les Paul or Stephen's sunburst with the Bigsby. The sunburst was prettier, but it sounded better too. It had much more treble and it had the thin neck. That's what sold it to me. It had an unbelievable feel. Stephen said "Oh, give me like $350 or something."'

Now Waddy was armed with the right guitar but, because of management difficulties, nowhere to meaningfully play it. Still, he was immersing himself in the scene and had begun to meet studio musicians. 'I realised that I played as well as these guys did. I thought, why shouldn't I become a studio player?'

A chance meeting led to an introduction to established producer Nik Venet, renowned for signing the Beach Boys. 'Nik liked what I did. He was the one who really propelled me. He was doing a lot of these folk records, so I was playing a lot of acoustic.' Venet arranged an important audition for Waddy with his electric rig and a couple of days later Waddy got a call from revered big-shot producer Lou Adler. He was on his way.

'Lou really dug what I was doing and the next thing I knew I was working for Carole King, and then everything started snowballing. It was an incredible time to be in Los Angeles. It was our Liverpool. It was an explosion. I made the decision that I wanted to be a studio player and in six months or so it was happening.'

Next, Wachtel heard the Everly Brothers were going on tour and needed a guitar player. 'I said, well, that's my gig! I know every word, harmony part, every lick. There's no way I can't get that job. That's where I met Warren Zevon. He was the leader of the Everly's band.'

Wachtel got the job and played on the Everly's 1972 *Stories We Could Tell* LP, going on to work with Zevon, even co-writing classics like *Werewolves Of London*. Six albums with Linda Ronstadt, three with James Taylor and to date seven with Stevie Nicks have provided steady work, while hundreds of sessions with the likes of Bob Dylan, Carly Simon, Don Henley, Tom Waits and Randy Newman further demonstrate his adaptability.

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Waddy with his much modded mystery white resprayed Les Paul: 'It's the ugliest guitar on earth!'

Photo: Mike Prior

'I would always look for the spaces in the music. You're looking for the counterpoint. You can always find a spot where you can add something interesting, a small burst to counter the melody or a rhythm part – you just have to really listen and all those tiny moments add up. I believe my ear and my sense of counterpoint are what keep me floating. On a lot of the sessions I used to imitate a steel guitar. I'd just go direct into the board. You have to play very precisely to get the pitch correct, but with the Bigsby and the volume pedal it can sound like a steel guitar. I do it on Randy Newman's *Little Criminals* album on a song called *Rider In The Rain*.'

'I would always look for the spaces in the music. You're looking for the counterpoint'

With all the work Wachtel's Les Paul has had to withstand there have been accidents, and the first one even led to a dalliance with a Fender.

'The first time was when we were on the road with Carole King. The lights went out, I heard this crash and someone says "Uh-oh, your guitar is broken." My prize Les Paul! They said they'd buy me a guitar. We were in Nashville so I went to George Gruhn's and I'm looking at these goldtops and I know they all have that baseball bat feel to them. Over on the other wall is this beautiful maple-board sunburst Strat. Now this was the early to mid '70s and I'd never even touched a Fender a this point. So I said, let me try that Strat there, and George goes "That's a 1956" and it's great and it's beautiful and I can't turn down the offer of a new guitar, so I said, I'll take it.' Waddy's Strat work became the stuff of legend – although George was slightly wide of the mark on the dating; it turned out to be a '57 – but it never quite won the same place in his affections as the Les Paul.

By the 1980s, when Keith Richards' first solo project was being hatched – the *Talk Is Cheap* album – there was no audition, no argument; it was Waddy he wanted.

'I was told Keith was looking for me, so I gave him a call. He said "Waddy! Listen, I'm putting a band together and you're in it." We'd barely rehearsed and we were off to Canada to do the record. I packed the Les Paul and I couldn't wait for him to see it, thinking he was gonna love it. We start playing and I can feel the glue in the crease in the back... it's coming apart. I went "Oh no, this can't be happening." Keith just goes, "Well, here... use this one..." It was some weird kind of black Les Paul thing with a rounded cutaway. The first song we did was called *How I Wish*, and I played the solo live. I'm playing on an alien guitar, but it worked. It was like that, all very loose, a lot of improvised stuff. A great experience... and the best band I'd ever been in.'

A roadworthy substitute for the 1960 Les Paul was needed, but the thin-necked variety were hard to come by. 'A good friend of mine told me about a guy with a house full of guitars for sale. I go over there and I'm looking around, and I see one leaning up against the wall backwards, and I just put my hand around the neck and thought "Oh, right!" When I turned it around it was "Arghhh! What happened?" It's the ugliest guitar in the world. It looks like it's been spray-painted white, but underneath you can see it's a goldtop. For some reason it's got the right neck on it. It turned out to be the loudest Les Paul I'd ever played, and also, when you turned the volume down it stayed really clear. I eventually found out through Pierre De Beauport, Keith's tech, that there's a preamp in it. There's a battery in there which has lasted forever! I just thought I'd happened to buy the loudest Les Paul in the world!'

The mystery white Les Paul has served well, and recently, since his old 1960 warhorse has been retired, it's become Waddy's main squeeze – but that might change, as the Gibson Custom shop recently knocked on Waddy's door and asked to see his 1960.

'It's this Les Paul Collector's Choice series. The prototype just came and I almost fainted when I opened the case. It's identical. Every nick and every little burn – it's incredible. It was like some kind of acid trip!'

So now Waddy's burst is officially endorsed by Gibson as one of the most desirable on the planet. 'My precious baby now stays hanging on the wall at home. If I take it out of the house, the insurance cancels. Keith said to me when we were on tour, "What are you dragging that heavy fucking guitar around for, man?" Then he picked it up and started playing it. He says "Wads, now I see why, this thing is amazing!"' What a lucky guitar to find its way into the hands of a great player who, although often unsung, has always made the best possible use of it.

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DANELECTRO
'59M-NOS

Blue is the colour, lipstick is the game, and this limited edition Danelectro combines recycled components with the Led Zep upgrade and some nutty new finishes. Review by **Richard Purvis**

Now that the recession's finished, you're probably reading this on the balcony of a luxury beach house in St Lucia, rocking gently in a hammock while you wait for the servants to bring you another pineapple and coconut smoothie. Ah, the pure turquoise of those sandy shallows is every bit as intense as it looked in the brochure, isn't it? But now look at the finish on this guitar, and suddenly your Caribbean idyll looks like a stagnant backwater of the River Trent. Hot dang. Turquoise doesn't get more turquoise than this.

Not that you'd know it if you worked in the Danelectro stockroom – the name they've given to this vivid hue, for some psychedelically-inspired reason, is Baby Come Back Blue. Check the panel on the right for the other daft options dreamed up for this double-cutaway Dano, a guitar that looks otherwise identical to the black-only 'Jimmy Page' model. There is another difference, however, and the clue to that is in the name.

It's strange to think that the modern Danelectro company has been around long enough to have anything that could be described as NOS (new old stock), but that's the story with these pickups. Apparently, Danelectro discovered a batch of unused lipstick pickups dating back 15 years – which might not seem that long but does, to be fair, put them in a whole different century. Maybe they were in a box marked 'lipsticks' and someone delivered them to Estée Lauder by mistake.

Yes, those are the pickup adjustment screws. Welcome to Planet Dano

Coke-bottle headstock and individual Kluson-type tuners

The Danelectro '59M-NOS is close to the Jimmy Page model but it uses NOS lipstick pickups dating back 15 years

Anyway, did someone mention Jimmy Page? His favourite lo-fi twanger throughout the Led Zep years was a 1961 Danelectro 3021, in black, to which he fitted a Badass bridge. The replica of this guitar was launched a few years ago (not an official signature model, though the bridge was a fairly obvious clue) and, pickups aside, the '59M-NOS shares its basic spec. Mind you, anyone wanting to recreate Page's finest Dano moments should note two facts: first, he used his mostly for slide, so if our test guitar's slick action is anything to go by you'll need to raise the bridge a tad; and second, he didn't fit that Badass until some time around 1980, when the levee had long since broken and the band's career was pretty much finished. ➔

FACTFILE
DANELECTRO '59M-NOS

DESCRIPTION **Semi-acoustic guitar. Made in Korea**
PRICE **£449**

BUILD **Masonite (hardboard) top and back with plywood frame; maple bolt-on neck with 21-fret rosewood fingerboard; Badass-style bridge, Kluson-style tuners**
ELECTRICS **Two 15-year-old lipstick pickups, three-way selector switch, concentric volume and tone controls for each pickup**
LEFT-HANDERS **No**
FINISH **Baby Come Back Blue (as reviewed), Orange-Adelic, Go-Go Blue, Outa-Sight White, Right-On Red**

SCALE LENGTH
635mm/25"
NECK WIDTH
Nut 42mm
12th fret 52.5mm
DEPTH OF NECK
First fret 21mm
12th fret 23mm
STRING SPACING
Nut 35mm
Bridge 52mm
ACTION AS SUPPLIED
12th fret treble 1mm
12th fret bass 1.5mm
WEIGHT **2.7kg/5.94lbs**

CONTACT
John Hornby Skewes
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www.jhs.co.uk
www.danelectro.com

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Airline Jupiter
Vintage twang-box based on the Silvertone Jupiter, with trapeze tailpiece and DeArmond-alike pickups
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Fender
Cabronita Telecaster
Tele meets Gretsch in the affordable, Mexican-made version of this quirky solidbody
RRP **£646**

Danelectro
67 Heaven
A fun Dano with the usual pair of lipsticks and flimsy bridge... plus a faux-alligator finish
RRP **£449**

Huge 'seal' scratchplate is present and correct

In a sense the bridge makes this guitar less Danelectro-ish, but that's not to say it's had the fun and funk squeezed out

The Badass is a clever and efficient piece of hardware, combining the individually adjustable saddles of a tunomatic with the solidity of an all-in-one wraparound bridge/tailpiece. Danelectro's 'Badass-style' unit has been recessed into the body and gives the instrument a slightly more aggressive and serious look than the usual chrome and rosewood affair. It's not as pretty, though.

Everything else looks as it should. The sweeping white scratchplate is attached by just three screws, and the concentric volume/tone knobs have dinky little markers on the top that look like embedded ball bearings. There's a nice swirly texture to the cream-coloured binding tape on the sides, which is more neatly applied than some we've seen, although the overlapping section where the two ends meet isn't quite bang-on. The nut is aluminium and you'll notice there's a trussrod cover – just a simple piece of plastic held on by a single screw, but it echoes the white of the scratchplate and brings an extra touch of harmony to the whole design.

A shallow neck with low-profile frets, impressively well dressed, makes this an easy player out of the box and it will quickly tempt you into widdly wanderings up to the 15th fret – but not much further than that, as the neck meets the body at the 14th and a chunky heel means access to the top few frets is as awkward as it gets. That's the price you pay for retro charm, daddy-o.

Sounds

Acoustically the '59M-NOS is not as banjo-like as you might expect from these timbers (can you even call hardboard a timber?), with plenty of bottom end to balance out the clanking mids. Blindfolded, you could mistake it for a Thinline Tele. Those of us who like our Danos light and plinky might be worrying at this point, so let's plug into something clean, start in the middle position with both pickups in series and see if the familiar cluck is still there.

It is, but with perhaps more pep than we're used to – it's not smooth enough for breezy chords, but dig in to single notes and the vintage twang will leap out and force you to smile whether you like it or not. These pickups can be spiky – very spiky if you're not careful – but there's an impressive solidity to the tone on the wound strings.

Moving to either pickup on its own brings an immediate drop in output, but both are decent sounds. The bridge pickup isn't really any sharper than the two combined: it's effectively the same tone, without the neck unit's low-end warmth. Likewise, selecting that one on its own does not bring more bass, just less treble. Now things do get smoother, and you might even find yourself coming over all bluesy with the addition of a little overdrive. And with a lot of overdrive? This isn't the easiest rock guitar to control, but it can handle punky riffing on the bridge pickup just as well as it does grubby-trousered slide work in the middle position; and as a handy bonus, high gain levels help to flatten out the difference in output levels between the two.

Fender owners should be warned that there's no humbucking effect in the middle position, so background noise gets louder just as the signal does. And here's a minor annoyance: the tone controls perform that 'please upgrade me' trick of doing virtually nothing until they're almost at zero, then dropping off sharply. Guitar makers of the world, please, stop it.

Verdict

The three factors that set this guitar apart from a standard double-cut Dano are the NOS pickups, the Badass-style bridge and the fancy colours. Are 15-year-old pickups likely to sound markedly different to brand new ones? Maybe, but that's possibly the least significant of the three selling points. In a sense, the extra sustain provided by the bridge makes this less Danelectro-ish than other Danelectros, but that's not to say it's had all the fun and funk squeezed out of it... and besides, it is very, very turquoise.

Recessed Badass-type bridge is a lot sturdier than the regular type

Look, colour matched knobs are cool. Okay?

FINAL SCORE

DANELECTRO '59M-NOS	
Build Quality	**17**/20
Playability	**17**/20
Sound	**17**/20
Value for money	**18**/20
Vibe	**19**/20
TOTAL	**88%**

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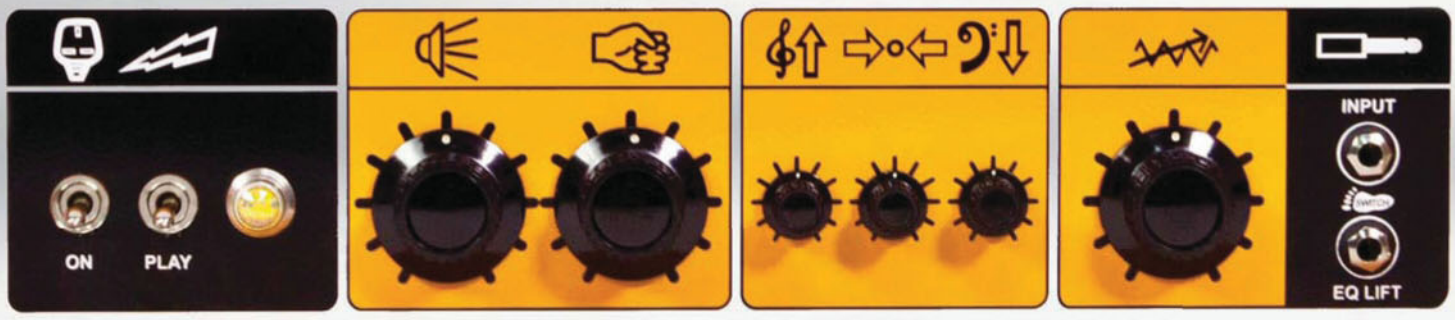

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ESP
Eclipse-I CTM Vibrato

ESPs are often popular with modern metal players but this is one for lovers of classic sounds, rich old-fashioned looks and that wicked Bigsby wobble. Review by **Marcus Leadley**

ESP has been offering this particular single-cut model since 1995. Originally subject to a Gibson lawsuit due to its initial similarity to the Les Paul, the instrument was redesigned just enough to get its head back over the parapet. With a slighter waist and sporting a sharp Florentine cutaway, the Eclipse has become a very popular instrument, which is evidenced by the fact that the company now offers no less than 26 versions spread over three series. There are versions loaded with EMGs and a Floyd Rose vibrato for those like their extreme rock action to come in a traditional-looking form; however, this version, with humbuckers, gold hardware and a Bigsby, is definitely retro-inspired.

To love this guitar, you have to love the idea of a black guitar with gold hardware. Personally I'm not convinced, but that doesn't detract from the fact that it's beautifully turned out. The main criticism of gold hardware is that the plating wears off and ages badly – so if you like that particular distressed look, I'll say no more on the subject.

Even with the added mass of the Bigsby this Eclipse weighs a bit less than a Les Paul, which is no bad thing. There's also a much deeper ribcage chamfer, so the guitar immediately feels sleek and comfortable. In other respects, such as the 24.75" scale length and the neck angle, it's a very similar proposition, so it does offer a friendly and familiar feel. The mahogany set neck is a peach, neither too thin nor too fat; ESP calls this a 'thin U' contour and it's a little bit fuller than a '60s-inspired 'thin taper' without being chubby. The ebony fingerboard is a classy touch, and with its dense grain structure buffed to a high shine it delivers a fast, super-smooth playing surface. You still get the right feel for digging in past the 12th fret for a wailing solo, but in other respects it feels faster and snappier than rosewood-appointed siblings.

True to ESP's high standards, the fretting and finishing are excellent. The neck is bound, which hides all the tangs. This binding was originally white, but the entire guitar has been oversprayed – post-assembly, it would appear – with a brown 'vintage' stain top coat. ➔

A ribcage cut adds comfort to the old recipe

ESP's pointy headstock and gold hardware throughout

The ribcage contour feels sleek and comfortable and the neck is a peach, being neither too thin nor too fat

FACTFILE
ESP ECLIPSE-1 CTM VIBRATO

DESCRIPTION **Solidbody guitar. Made in Japan**
PRICE **£1915 inc. plush case**

BUILD **Mahogany body with maple top, mahogany set neck with bound 22 fret ebony fingerboard featuring ESP 'flag' inlay position markers. Bone nut, Gotoh Magnum Lock tuners, Bigsby vibrato with TOM bridge with roller saddles. Gold-plated hardware**
ELECTRICS **Twin humbucker pickups: Seymour Duncan SH-1 (neck) and SH-2 (bridge), independent volume and tone controls and three-way selector**
LEFT-HANDERS **No**
FINISH **Vintage black**

SCALE LENGTH
629mm/24.75"
NECK WIDTH
Nut 44.2mm
12th fret 54mm
DEPTH OF NECK
First fret 21.6mm
12th fret 24mm
STRING SPACING
Nut 35.5mm
Bridge 50.5mm
ACTION AS SUPPLIED
12th fret treble 1.8mm
12th fret bass 2.2mm
WEIGHT **3.52kg/7.75lbs**

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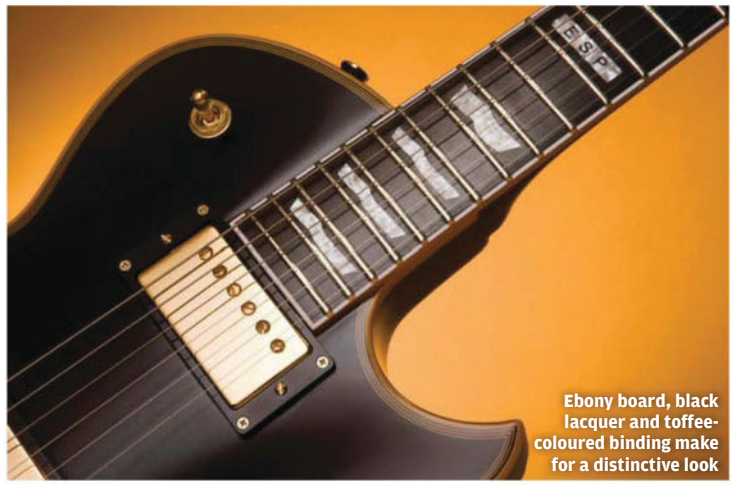
Like this? Try this...

Gibson
Les Paul Traditional
Classic single-cut instrument with humbuckers; there was even a black Bigsby equipped model in 2011, if you can track one down
RRP **£1799**

Tokai
UKC 195s
Maple top, mahogany body, finished in black and sporting gold hardware. A Bigsby would need to be an aftermarket modification or a special order
RRP **£1795**

Gretsch
Duo Jet
Bigsby-loaded and propelled by Filter'Tron humbuckers, in black with nickel hardware; a slightly different proposition but definitely riffing on the same theme
RRP **£1850**


Ebony board, black lacquer and toffee-coloured binding make for a distinctive look

Gold-plated Bigsby, gold pickup covers and ESP's TOM bridge

This also accounts for the slightly strange tint of the body... but it looks great with the gold hardware.

There are no surprises when it comes to the electrics: the Eclipse is powered by a Seymour Duncan SH-4 humbucker in the bridge position and an SH-1 at the neck. These are hooked up to independent tone and volume controls and a three-way pickup selector.

All the other hardware is A-grade merchandise, too. The Gotoh Magnum Lock tuners are smooth and accurate, and the Bigsby is a genuine item, not a licensed copy. Here it's sensibly teamed with a tunomatic-style TOM bridge with roller saddles, and the advantage can be felt immediately as the guitar actually stays in tune when you wiggle the arm.

One minor gripe concerns the fact that the routing for the bridge pillars does not take the arch of the body top into consideration; this means the edge of the post is clearly visible, and it looks a little untidy on an instrument in this price bracket. As a further recess would lower the bridge height by a full 2mm, I'm guessing the look was compromised in relation to adjustment potential.

Sounds

These are tried and tested pickups, and in this guitar they really deliver the goods. The neck pickup and twin-pickup combination voices deliver great clean tones. The latter is bright and crisp with loads of sparkle; the former offers a mellow response that articulates any form of modern jazz brilliantly, or wind back the very-functional tone control for a darker solo or comping sound. Pop accompaniment and country picking are equally well catered for.

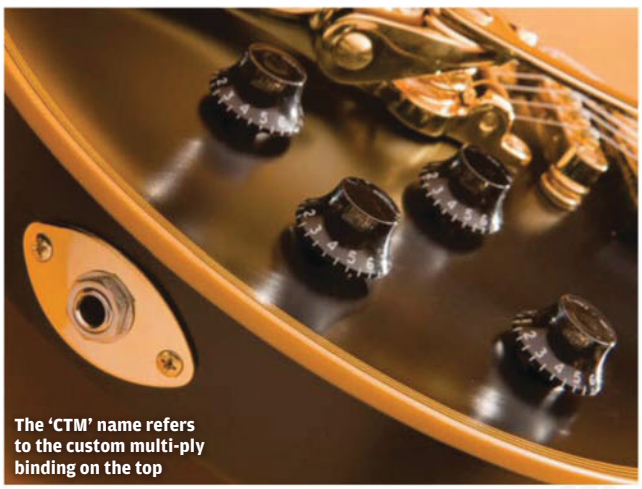
Some might feel that the bridge humbucker clean tone has a bit too much of a midrange hump to be super-adaptable, but it's a rare humbucker than doesn't exhibit some kind of compromise in this department, and the pay off is the classic rock tone you get when you start to wind up the amp's gain control. It's 10/10 in that department: an edge of break-up in the sound brings on the blues and the new wave angst, or drive the situation a bit harder for classic metal. Riffs and big chords are especially pleasing, and the Eclipse's natural bright, clear tone helps the sound cut through a mix.

Opening this guitar up to the influence of a pedalboard is a seriously time-consuming business. Things get really funky when wah or auto wah get into the equation, and delay can put you in the mood to take on a stadium. The ESP's sound can handle the effect of a badass fuzz pedal, a ring modulator or serious pitch shifting because the basic character is nicely robust.

Verdict

Well, it's a great guitar to play, sounds great, and it's beautifully made. That should say it all. For the right person this Eclipse shouts, 'buy me!' loud and clear, but the price tag is on the steep side, and there's a lot of competition in this part of market. Famous makers like Gibson and PRS are fielding instruments with similar features and not dissimilar prices, and there are several other pitches from top-end Japanese makers to consider as well. You really need to play the field before you splash this much cash, but that being said, the Eclipse is a hugely likable instrument and, in fairness, finding an equivalent with a Bigsby under £2000 will be a challenge. So if the Bigsby is the deciding factor, then it's off to the shop

The Eclipse is a great guitar. The price is steep, but finding an equivalent with a Bigsby under £2000 will be a challenge


The 'CTM' name refers to the custom multi-ply binding on the top

Flag markers match the headstock shape

FINAL SCORE	
ESP ECLIPSE-1 CTM VIBRATO	
Build Quality	**18**/20
Playability	**18**/20
Sound	**18**/20
Value for money	**16**/20
Vibe	**17**/20
TOTAL	**87%**

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KOLL
Troubadour II

Blending elements of Fender and Gretsch and built by the reliable Premier Builders Guild in California, this Koll guitar provides a new angle on 'affordable custom'. Review by **Huw Price**

It would be fair to say that vintage Gretsches have provided Saul Koll with much of his inspiration up until now. However, with the Troubadour he's taken a different path by attempting to imagine what he might have come up with had he been an employee of Leo Fender's during the mid-1950s. Like many other owners of successful guitar companies Saul Koll still builds guitars, but his personal involvement is now confined to custom orders. Most Koll guitars, including the Troubadour II, are built in the Premier Builders Guild's Arroyo Grande workshop in California by Gene Baker and his team. The Premier Builder's Guild provides the marketing, management and customer service for various high-end brands, including Fano, Two Rock, Tone King and b3. The Troubadour was devised specifically for the PRG, and for a handbuilt custom guitar it's relatively affordable.

The new Fender influence means that the Troubadour models have bolt-on maple necks rather than Koll's usual set necks, and the scale length has been extended to a Fender-like 25.5". The Troubadour also gets a fresh headstock, but Koll has retained a 10 degree back angle. It's narrower than Koll's signature headstock, and the strings follow a straight string path over a polished Tusq nut to a set of '50s style Gotoh tuners. Our review model, the

Natural-finish alder body and matching tortie plastic

Kicked-back headstock with Les Paul-style tuners

Koll's new Troubadour has a bolt-on neck, a long Fender scale, TV Jones Power'Tron pickups and a Gotoh vibrato

Troubadour II, has a pair of TV Jones Power'Trons rather than the regular Troubadour's single bridge pickup.

Although the Troubadour has a retro flavour, Koll is content to adopt modern features where appropriate. Ideally, vibrato bridges will operate smoothly and hold tune; low friction is key, so Koll's preferred bridge is a Gotoh unit that moves against two knife-edge pivots rather than six round screws. The arm is a push-fit but even so, the bridge saddles are vintage-style folded steel.

It's not easy to find handsome tortoiseshell these days but the Koll's plastics are superb, with a glow that suggests there may be a metallic or reflective coating on the rear surface. They're superbly shaped too, with polished rounded edges. The control cavity cover is a very tight fit, but we popped it off anyway to check out ➔

FACTFILE
KOLL TROUBADOUR II

DESCRIPTION **Electric guitar. Made in the USA**
PRICE **£1799**

BUILD **Solid offset alder body, bolt-on maple neck with 22-fret rosewood fingerboard, Gotoh vibrato bridge, Kluson-style tuners**
ELECTRICS **Two TV Jones Power'Tron humbucking pickups, three-way switch, master volume and tone**
LEFT-HANDERS **No**
FINISHES **Check website**

SCALE LENGTH
648mm/25.5"
NECK WIDTH
Nut 43mm
12th fret 51.5mm
DEPTH OF NECK
First fret 19mm
12th fret 24mm
STRING SPACING
Nut 36mm
Bridge 51.5mm
ACTION AS SUPPLIED
12th fret treble 1.5mm
12th fret bass 2.5mm
WEIGHT **3.6kg/7.9lbs**

CONTACT **Coda Music**
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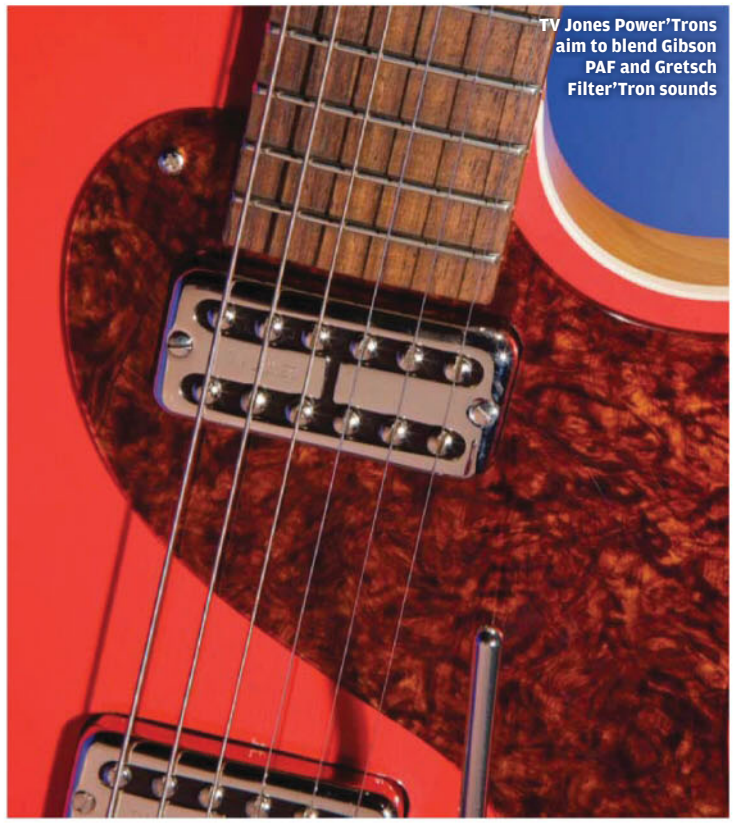
Like this? Try this...

Fender
La Cabronita LTD Borracha Relic
If you mate a Cabronita with an upside-down Jazzmaster, you get this. It's got an alder body, a 21-fret maple neck, two TV Jones Power'Trons, a three-way switch, a volume pot with S1 switch, and Sperzels. It's a statement
RRP **£2160**

Gretsch
G6128T-TVP Power Jet
Think 'updated single-cut Duo Jet' with an arched laminated maple top, semi-hollow one-piece mahogany body, ebony fingerboard, 22 frets, two TV Jones Power'Trons, a pinned rosewood-base adjust-o-matic, and a Gretsch Bigsby B3C vibrato
RRP **£2060**

Fano
JM6 Old Black
Also from the Premier Builder's Guild workshop, this pre-aged guitar features an alder Jazzmaster-shaped body, Lollar Imperial humbuckers, a bolt-on maple neck with a rosewood fingerboard, and a tun-o-matic bridge with a stop tailpiece. Very cool
RRP **£2499**

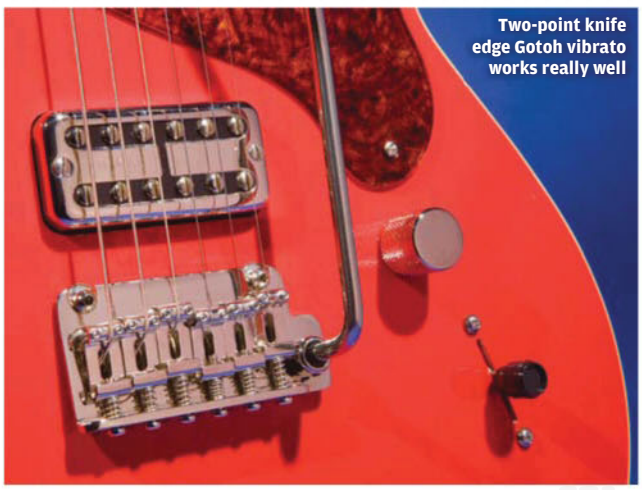

TV Jones Power'Trons aim to blend Gibson PAF and Gretsch Filter'Tron sounds

The Koll Troubadour's dark and gutsy Power'Trons are excellent for grinding indie rock rhythm and scorching solos

the wiring. Cloth-covered wire is used for hook ups and the tone control is connected, '50s style, from the output (centre) lug of the volume pot. Koll has used a Sprague Orange Drop capacitor, and the pickup wires have been left nice and long for owners who may wish to explore coil-tapping possibilities.

The front of the slab rosewood fingerboard is devoid of markers; there are dots on the side, but the clay-like hue may be hard to discern on a dimly lit stage. Two neck profiles are offered – a vintage V or the '50s style C profile, as on this review model. The two-piece alder body is centre-jointed with a Strat-style chamfer on the top and a tummy tuck at the back. It balances straight on the knee and feels comfortable. The top edge is bound and, like the neck, the rear of the body has a satin finish.

It's said that there were several shades of Fender's fiesta red. Koll's mix is on the pinker side of the spectrum and it almost screams 'vintage Strat'. As far as we're aware this Troubadour II isn't marketed as a relic, but the top's gloss lacquer has checked somewhat. The way the pattern has developed around the screw holes suggests that this has occurred naturally. More attractive? It's a matter of taste, but it does indicate the finish is nitro.


Two-point knife edge Gotoh vibrato works really well

Unusual headstock provides a straight string path

Sounds

Despite the Fender influence in design and construction, the Troubadour sounds nothing like a Fender. Given the different nature of the Power'Tron pickups this may have been predictable, but Fender's similarly-equipped La Cabronita does hit a middle ground between Tele and Gretsch, though with lower-output Filter'Trons.

The Power'Trons give the Troubadour II a dark and gutsy tone that's excellent for grinding indie rock rhythm and scorching solos. With all Filter'Tron type pickups, though, the height of the pickups is crucial. As supplied we felt that the Troubadour's were a little too low, and we found that raising them closer to the strings improved definition with some much needed brightness.

The bass end is fat and powerful, and rock players will enjoy the chewy mids. The idea behind '50s wiring is to avoid loss of clarity when the volume control is turned down and it works very effectively for maintaining the highfrequency sheen.

The Troubadour has ample woody resonance, and backing off the volume allows it to come through. It also reveals more contrast between the tone of the pickups, bringing out a touch more sprang from the bridge and a sweeter roundness from the neck. In clean mode, however, the middle position steals the show as the reduced midrange content improves the Troubadour's touch dynamics.

Verdict

Given the construction and the materials we felt that the Troubadour II would be better-sounding and more versatile with slightly lower-output pickups, as the quest for power detracts from the subtler tones and dynamic response of this unusually resonant guitar. Still, it's beautifully made, plays superbly, and looks fantastic.

FINAL SCORE

KOLL TROUBADOUR II	
Build Quality	**19**/20
Playability	**18**/20
Sound	**16**/20
Value for money	**18**/20
Vibe	**19**/20
TOTAL	**90%**

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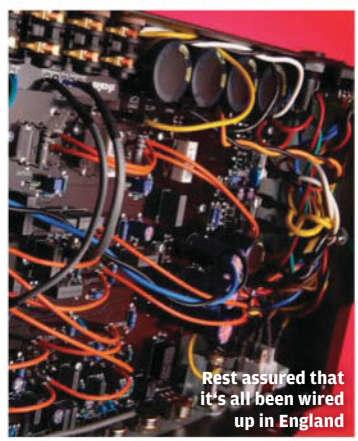
ORANGE
Dual Dark 50

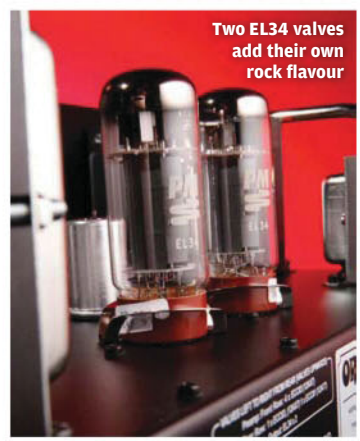
Orange amps used to be brilliant one-trick ponies, but this new stage-ready all-valve head offers two flavours of tone plus a wide range of gain choices. Review by **Huw Price**

Black is the new Orange, or so it would seem. It's a relatively new look for an established amp manufacturer, and the colour change signifies a lot more that a style rethink. At present the Dual Dark series comprises two models – the 100 and the 50. Both are heads, and they're rated at 100W and 50W. We're reviewing the smaller of the two.

The Dual Dark amps are mostly aimed towards heavy rock and metal players, and they offer an alternative to the 'classic' Orange tone. Channel A of this twin-channel head is described as having a 'completely new voicing'. Channel B has the same sound as the Orange Dark Terror, but the resemblance stops at the preamp because the power stage of the Dual Dark 50 features a pair of EL34 power valves running in Class AB.

The basketweave tolex and gold piping may be Vox features but the aesthetics and control layout remain recognisably Orange. Last time this writer reviewed an Orange amp he faced the ignominy of calling up Orange's tech team because he couldn't get the amp to switch on. The confusion was caused by the Full/Half power switch, which turned out to be a three-way with standby mode in the middle position. Fortunately this is now clearly labelled on the front panel and we were able to get the Dual Dark to switch on without further embarrassment.


Rest assured that it's all been wired up in England


Two EL34 valves add their own rock flavour

The Dual Dark 50 offers a Dark Terror sound plus a new voicing on Channel A and is powered by a pair of EL34 valves

Orange has always had a quirky approach to labelling, on occasion relying exclusively on stylish but slightly cryptic hieroglyphs. For the Dual Dark they have adopted a belt and braces approach and the symbols are augmented by descriptive labels that even the average guitar journalist should be able to decipher.

Channel A is the most fully-featured, with a complete set of Treble, Middle and Bass controls. Like the Dark Terror, Channel B has a single midrange shaping control that shifts the frequency balance from full mid boost with attenuated highs and lows to mid scoop with full-on treble and bass. Both channels get independent Volume and Gain controls and there's an Attenuator that works on both channels.

Resistive attenuators tend to employ rotary switches, but this one has an infinitely variable control. A quick call to Orange confirmed that the Dual Dark attenuator relies on a customised phase inverter that determines when the output tubes begin to clip and the manner of the clipping. This method is preferred in order to maintain a direct connection between the ↔

FACTFILE
ORANGE DUAL DARK 50

DESCRIPTION **50/25W twin-channel valve head with attenuator and tube buffered effects loop. Made in the UK**
PRICE **£1479**

CONTROLS **Attenuator, Volume, Treble, Middle, Bass, Gain (all Channel A), Volume, Shape, Gain (all Channel B), Power, Full/Standby/Half and Channel switches**
VALVES **Five ECC83s, one ECC81, two EL34s**
DIMENSIONS **55cm x 27cm x 28cm**
WEIGHT **21kg/46.2lbs**

CONTACT **Orange Amps 0208 905 2828 www.orange-amps.com**

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RRP **£1556**

Fuchs
Full House-50
Casino Series 50W two-channel head with 6L6 power valves, 4/8/16 Ohms outputs, FX loop, 3-band EQ and input gain for both channels, OD channel with Tone and Master control, built-in reverb with Decay and Level
RRP **£1361**

Mesa-Boogie
Express 5:50+
Two-channel head with Multiwatt circuit offering 5/25/50W options, 6L6 power valves, all-valve spring reverb, serial FX loop, Solo function, external inputs for Channel 1 and 2, reverb. Comes complete with four-button footswitch and cover
RRP **£1399**

The attenuator works well but rewards some time spent investigating it

Though it can edge towards retro rock or classic metal, the Dual Dark 50 is a modern rock amp with a UK/US sound

speakers and the output transformer. Although controls are provided on the front panel, both channel switching and attenuator bypass can be done by footswitch too.

Quarter-inch jack sockets are provided on the back panel, adjacent to the effects send and return connections. Orange use an ECC81 valve to buffer the effects loop, with a further five ECC83s handling preamp duties and providing four gain stages. In fact Orange claims that these are the highest-gain amps the company has ever manufactured. The stock EL34 power valves can also be swapped for other suitable tetrodes, so long as a qualified tech performs a routine re-bias.

High-power Orange amps have always had an aura of robustness and the Dual Dark maintains the tradition. Made in the UK, it's heavy and solidly put together with superbly applied tolex and piping, metal corner covers and chromed facia protectors. All the cooling vents are metal, and everything is screwed down so tightly it can only inspire confidence.

Sounds

Starting with the Gain and Volume controls for both channels set to high noon, it's clear that they produce similar amounts of overdrive but they have quite different voicings. Channel B is the more edgy and aggressive, with lashings of upper midrange bite. Even on half power clean headroom isn't an issue, because the gain range of both channels is immense. Channel B's Shape control is powerful, yet it remains useable at both extremes. The extra edge when running at half-gain translates into extra clarity at low-gain settings.

The Shape control is slightly counter-intuitive: best think of it as a mid-scoop. Fully counter-clockwise the midrange is lifted to produce a thick, slightly plummy tone with clear highs and solid lows. As it's moved clockwise you can almost feel the midrange changing shape, and at 11 o'clock the tone starts to shift from UK fatness to a hollowed-out Fender-meets-clean-Mesa sound.

In clean mode Channel A has a thicker, warmer tone with extra weight in the low mids and more forgiving transients. While Channel B is ideally suited to wrenching clear and bright tones out of hot humbuckers, Channel B's sweeter treble and softer attack works better with single coils.

Despite producing an outstanding array of clean sounds, the Dual Dark is really engineered for distortion. The first third of Channel A's Gain control moves through milder overdrive tones but the Dual Dark really feels like it's being reined back until Gain reaches about halfway. This is where notes start to gel, sustain draws out and the dynamics come to life.

Experimentation is needed with the Volume and Attenuator settings. I'd expected that pushing the power stage and using extra attenuation would smooth out the sound, but Channel A's distortion tones are clearer and smoother with the Volume set lower. Strangely enough it was the other way with Channel B, where higher Volume settings helped to refine the preamp distortion's slightly fuzzy edge. The distortion on this channel has a more modern, US vibe – crunchy and brutal, but superbly well-defined.

Plenty of speaker load options and footswitching for channel select and the attenuator

Verdict

Rather than taking the usual clean/dirty channel approach, Orange has come up with two channels that have distinct voicings, yet they're still capable of a vast range of clean to extremely distorted tones; hardly surprising when they each have four gain stages. Both could be used as a clean channel or a crunch channel and it's left for the player to determine which is preferred for each application. The attenuation feature is a useful addition that can be used simply to manage volume levels or interact with the Volume controls to explore various levels of power amp drive. If you opt for the footswitch, you can even use it as a 'boost' by switching the attenuation off for solos. Although it can edge into retro rock or classic metal territory, the Dual Dark 50 is not really about that. It's a modern rock amp with simple yet powerful controls and a bit of a UK/US crossover thing going on. Powerful stuff indeed.

FINAL SCORE

ORANGE DUAL DARK 50	
Build Quality	**18**/20
Versatility	**18**/20
Sound	**18**/20
Value for money	**18**/20
Vibe	**19**/20
TOTAL	**91%**

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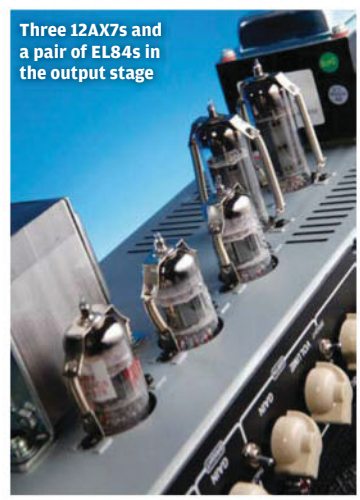
VOX
Night Train 15

Surely everyone needs a low/mid powered 1x12" club-sized combo, and this affordable Vox has some cool-sounding surprises up its sleeve. Review by **Huw Price**

We like the way Vox's marketing department have described the looks of the Night Train 15 as 'extreme'. They're certainly distinctive, but those who are aware of the heritage of this company will recognise the familiar rounded corners as well as the moulded plastic carrying handle. Equipped with cream chickenhead knobs, vintage Vox-style black tolex and wide cooling vents, the Night Train has a sturdy and robust feel with impressive finish quality. The '60s-style rectangular logo is a nice touch, too.

This 15W combo is driven by three 12AX7s in the preamp and a pair of EL84 power amp valves. It has two channels designated Girth and Bright, an FX loop, onboard reverb and a Celestion G12M Greenback speaker. A Vox VFS2A footswitch can be purchased separately for channel switching and tone stack bypass – effectively turning the Night Train 15W into a three-channel amp.

The smooth, punchy Greenback is a great match for the amp



Three 12AX7s and a pair of EL84s in the output stage

This 15W valve combo has two channels, an FX loop, onboard reverb and a Celestion G12M Greenback speaker

Sounds

The Gain control adjacent to the input works on the Bright channel. This is nominally the clean channel and shares the equalisation controls with the dirtier Girth channel. With Thick disengaged, this is a very versatile clean channel with a respectable amount of clean headroom for a 15W valve amp.

Vox clean tones have always been about chewy mids, a slight furriness in the upper mids and degree of chime in the treble register. Roll back the treble, boost the middle and engage the Dark switch and the Night Train 15 will take you straight there. Being hyper-critical, we'd say that the chime isn't quite the same – but that's probably due to the Night Train having a rockier-sounding ceramic G12 Greenback rather than a shimmering Alnico Blue. At this price, we can't complain. The cooling fan was the only feature that bothered us; having said that, it's possibly the ➔

FACTFILE
VOX NIGHT TRAIN 15

DESCRIPTION **Twin-channel 15W valve combo with digital reverb, Celestion G12M Greenback speaker, and 2x8 Ohm extension sockets. Made in China**
PRICE **£718**

CONTROLS **Master Volume, Bright/Girth channel switch, Reverb, Dark switch. Girth channel: Gain, Volume. Bright channel: Gain, Thick switch, Tone; Bass, Middle, Treble in common for both channels**
VALVES **Three 12AX7s and two EL84s**
DIMENSIONS **49.5cm wide, 41cm high, 26cm deep**
WEIGHT **17.5kg/38.5lbs**

CONTACT **Vox Amps 01908 30463 www.voxamps**

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15W combo with 12AX7s and two EL84s, 12" Fender Lightning Bolt by Eminence, speaker, external speaker output, one channel. Controls are Volume, Reverb, Master, Mid, Bass, Treble and FAT switch
RRP **£464.11**

Egnater
Tweaker 112
This 6V6-driven 15W combo has a Celestion G12M speaker, a buffered effects loop and a huge range of clean, overdriven and high gain tones
RRP **£569**

Jet City
JCA2212
A twin-channel 1x12" combo with five 12AX7s and two EL84 tubes producing 20W, with a footswitch, FX loop and a Jet City Custom Eminence Speaker
RRP **£229**

The two channels sound very different: clean to tweedy grind on one side, modern crunch on the other

Engaging Thick mode bypasses the tone stack to give valvey grind, sweet saturation and ample sustain for soloing

quietest we have encountered, and totally inaudible when the amp is in use.

Disengaging the Dark switch provides a bit more upper midrange bite along with a hint of sweet overdrive that responds superbly to playing dynamics. Playing a Stratocaster though this setting certainly put us in a very Hendrix frame of mind.

As if that wasn't enough, rolling the Middle control back and turning the treble up pulls a very convincing Fender blackface-type tone out of the Night Train. Turn up the reverb for a classic American blues tone, then push it beyond halfway and you'll be surfing USA-style. The reverb is extremely spring-like – so much so that we felt compelled rock the Night Train back and forth to test for 'spring boing' on a couple of occasions. Nope; no springs. It's definitely digital, but it certainly doesn't sound that way.

All the above goes out of the window when the Thick switch is engaged and the tone stack is bypassed. On anything other than a British amp it would be unsurprising if this were labelled 'Tweed' rather than 'Thick', because it produces significant boost in both midrange and overdrive.

As the status LED switches from green to yellow you're rewarded with a compressed and valvey grind, sweet harmonic saturation and ample sustain for soloing. It's old-school stuff that will please players who prefer to control things from their guitar, because the Thick mode cleans up superbly with no loss of vibrancy or dynamic response.

Many amps struggle to achieve the level of versatility that we have experienced so far, and we haven't even tried the Girth channel yet. Thick mode is a hard act to follow, but rather than going for more of the same, Vox's design team has opted for something crunchier and far more contemporary.

The first thing that struck us was the difference in dynamic response. Where Thick mode did the fat midrange with saggy dynamics thing, Girth mode is a good deal punchier and more aggressive. This proved to be a very positive asset, because Girth opens the Night Train up to some serious levels of gain where extra focus and tightness are prerequisites.

We reckon that the smooth highs and punchy mids of Greenback G12 make it a good choice because alnico speakers can sound a tad fizzy and edgy with very high-gain amps. Since the Night Train veers into metal territory we're pleased to report that harsh overtones, beating harmonics and grainy fizz are absent, even at maximum gain.

It's inevitable that there will be some degree of compromise when two channels are routed through the same tone stack. To Vox's credit they have kept this to a minimum, and in Thick mode the two channels are pretty much independent. Since the Girth channel has its own volume control, the shared master volume is a non-issue and balancing up the gain and output levels for each channel couldn't be simpler.

The FX loop, footswitch socket and speaker outs are recessed at the rear

Verdict

The Night Train 15 is an unusually versatile valve amp that produces convincing high-quality sounds over a wide range of styles. With a street price of less than £600 it should be attractive to those looking to upgrade to their first serious valve amp as well as more experienced players seeking killer valve tone in a grab-and-go package.

FINAL SCORE	
VOX NIGHT TRAIN 15	
Build Quality	**18**/20
Versatility	**19**/20
Sound	**18**/20
Value for money	**18**/20
Vibe	**19**/20
TOTAL	**92%**

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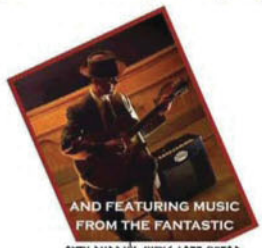

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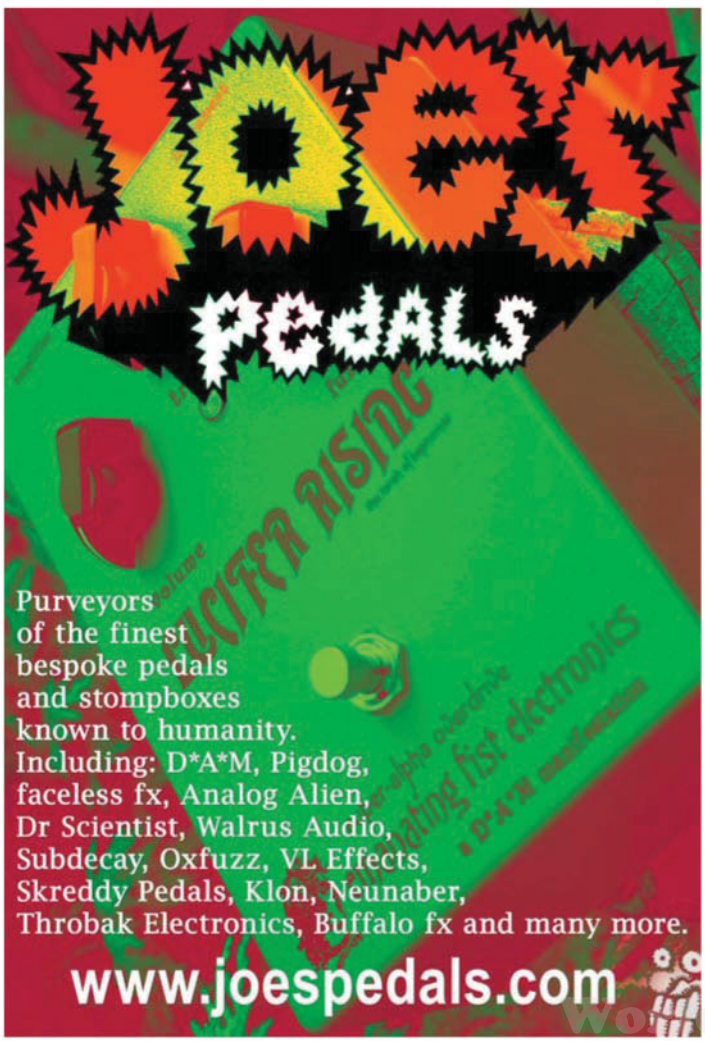

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EVENTIDE
H9 Harmonizer

It might be a bit pricey but hell, this pedal makes just about every pedal, apart from your distortion box, obsolete. **Marcus Leadley** takes on the manual...

Founded in 1971, Eventide is well known for producing top end studio sound processing equipment. Today, the company also makes stompboxes – not many, though, and it sticks to doing what it knows best: reverbs, delays, pitchshifters and the like. Now we have the new H9, and what's exciting about this pedal is that, while it comes loaded with nine algorithms and 99 presets, it can run any algorithm from any Eventide pedal, which can be purchased as downloads. This way you can pick and choose and make one personal 'ultimate' Eventide pedal for a lot less than buying all the individual units.

Despite looking a bit like something you might wake up next to in a hospital bed, the H9 is actually fairly simple to get the hang of. This is no small mercy as it's an incredibly powerful unit. There is no question that you need to read the manual and learn how to use the multi-function controls – but you can get pretty clued up in just a couple of hours. On the top panel you have

MIDI allows sequencer control

Expression pedal and stereo ready

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five buttons, a rotary encoder and two stomp switches. Connectivity is straightforward: mono/stereo ins and out are on the back panel, along with an expression pedal socket; MIDI in/out/thru are on the left-hand side. There a 9v power port and a USB connection – more about this in a minute.

Starting out with basic standalone mode you connect the H9 between your guitar and your amp(s). The unit's smart enough to detect if you're running in mono or stereo. You can scroll forward through patches by hitting the Preset button and scrolling with the rotary, and the patches load automatically. Alternatively, for foot-friendly operation, click the right hand footswitch to advance though the patches; then you need to press the left footswitch to engage the patch. To scroll back, you have to click the rotary encoder to change the direction of travel for the right-hand footswitch. It's a bit of a faff but fairly easy to get the hang of – but it doesn't make for speedy changes on the fly, so do plan ahead.

To alter presets, the rotary control can be set up like an expression pedal by hitting the Hotknob button. Hit the X, Y or Z buttons to tweak parameters and then use the rotary encoder to change them; the 'light ring' will tell you how much. Which parameter will change depending on the preset: for example, mix/feedback-A/feedback-B or intensity/depth/speed. Each preset comes with the most likely controllers ready-mapped to these knobs, but in Expert mode you can change to others – sometimes from as many as 10 options – so scope for customisation is extensive. Presets can be easily renamed.

There's a tap tempo function so you can lock the speed of the effect to the tempo of your song; tapping the left footswitch with tempo mode off allows you to adjust in milliseconds. Press the right footswitch and the preset button at the same time to enter tempo mode, and here you can adjust multiple delays to different expressions of note values – they can tap in a BPM and all the delays will stay locked to your predetermined values. You can also adjust the input gain to ensure the best signal level for your pickups. Finally, in terms of basic features, the H9 has a built-in tuner which is very easy to use.

So much for the basics! There are also a whole raft of connectivity, control and editing possibilities that revolve around iOS devices such as iPads and iPhones, which can communicate wirelessly, via Bluetooth, with the pedal – in real time. The H9 Control app allows you to tweak parameters with onscreen knobs that appear more analogue than anything on the stompbox. There are some clever creative features, like the ability to randomise knob settings if you fancy a bit of sonic exploration. You can also map the iOS device as a controller and 'swipe' parameters on the fly. There's a mad feature where you can take advantage of your phone's motion-sensing capabilities and control parameters by waving it in the air – if the need should arise. Should you only have a laptop, you'll need that USB port to access the same functions.

In use

Back in general operating mode, the basic presets sound fantastic. Whether it's a simple slapback echo, a convoluted combination of delay and pitch-shifting or a dense but strangely understated atmosphere, the H9 totally delivers. Your underlying guitar signal is perfectly preserved and even close listening reveals a noise-free background. This unit is brilliant for

home recording and capable of adding a professional sheen to the most basic parts. Some presets encourage creative play, while some just sound daft. The best of the denser presets conjure filmic or orchestral moods. There's no rhyme or reason to the ordering of presets, so simple and complex sounds are all mixed up together. This makes the unit in its factory-programmed form a little impractical, so the ease with which you can edit, archive, delete and restore patches is very useful. You could edit up, say, eight patches for live work and then make these the only ones available – and the MIDI options mean you could even run the changes from a sequencer.

Verdict

While the H9 doesn't have all the bells and whistles of a complex multi-FX floor unit, it does its thing with professional finesse. Sure, it's excellent as a basic tap tempo tremolo or delay, but you could save yourself a heap of money by shopping elsewhere; what it's good for is selecting the Eventide sounds you really need. If you're likely to go straight over to customising, you can buy the Core version which comes loaded with only one algorithm – pitch shift – for about £100 less; then it's off to the Eventide online shop to load up with goodies. Both versions of the H9 come with a coupon for one free algorithm, and then they cost £13.99 each. This is a great pedal for exploring the complexity of high-end digital guitar effects.

FINAL SCORE

EVENTIDE H9 HARMONIZER	
Build Quality	**18**/20
Versatility	**19**/20
Sound	**19**/20
Value for money	**18**/20
Vibe	**17**/20
TOTAL	**91%**

FACTFILE

Eventide H9 Harmonizer

DESCRIPTION **Multi-FX processor, designed in the USA, assembled in China.**
RRP **£489 inc. power unit**

FEATURES **FX from other Eventide pedals: tape echo, vintage delay, chorus (liquid, organic, shimmer, classic), tremolo (bias/opto), pitch shifter (H910 and crystals), reverbs (shimmer/hall), plus new H9 ultratap delay. 99 presets, iOS/Bluetooth connectivity for editing, archiving and algorithm purchase/download via H9 app**

CONNECTIONS **Mono/stereo input/output, MIDI in/out/thru. 9v DC port, USB port**

CONTROLS **Hotknob, X, Y, X parameter buttons, rotary controller, Preset select, Active and Tap footswitches. All controls multi-function**

CONTACT **Source Distribution 020 8962 5080 www.eventide.com**

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TANGLEWOOD
TW45 EG E

Small, well-priced and with a cutaway, this Tanglewood might suit a fingerpicker who plays on stage and is looking for something a little different. Review by **Rick Batey**

FACTFILE
Tanglewood TW45 EG E

DESCRIPTION **Mini jumbo-sized electro-acoustic. Made in Korea**
PRICE **£599.95**

BUILD **Solid spruce top with laminated mahogany/quilted ash back and sides, maple binding, mahogany neck, rosewood fingerboard, open-gear tuners, Fishman Sonitone pickup system**
LEFT-HANDERS **No**
FINISH **Gloss body, satin neck**

SCALE LENGTH
650mm/25.6"
NECK WIDTH
Nut 43.5mm
12th fret 54mm
DEPTH OF NECK
First fret 20mm
Ninth fret 22mm
STRING SPACING
Nut 36mm
Bridge 54mm
ACTION AS SUPPLIED
12th fret treble 2.6mm
12th fret bass 2.8mm
WEIGHT **1.77kg/3.9lbs**

CONTACT **Tanglewood**
01937 841142
tanglewoodguitars.co.uk

Tanglewood's 'Super Folk' design is an interesting angle on the big-selling small-guitar format, and it features in the catalogue at every point from affordable to posh. It isn't a parlour, being wider; it isn't a 000, being more rounded; it's more a mini-jumbo, a bit like a Gibson Emmylou Harris, but with a cutaway. You'll find a Super Folk in the Liberty line-up for £169, in the colourful Discovery Super Folk range for £189, in the plain-looking Roadster group for £229, as a Sundance Natural at £569, as three different models in the Sundance Pro team between £699 and £799, once in the Sundance Elegance set – that's the one we have for review this month – at £599, and finally twice with a high-end Sundance Heritage tag at £949 and £1149... and there are apparently yet more to come. It's obviously a design that Tanglewood very much believes in.

So the TW45 EG E, which falls bang in the middle of this spread price-wise, is a compact folk-type guitar, 378mm wide across the lower bouts, or a shade under 15", which is a touch smaller than an OM; it's also an eighth of an inch shallower, so it's very compact. Nevertheless it's a full-size guitar neck-wise with a 25.5" scale and a nut width of 43.5mm, which is a hair's breadth below the accepted modern 'fingerpicking' standard of 1.75".

Gloss body finish with a satin neck

Dart-shaped volute and open-gear tuners

The TW45 EG E is a compact folk-type guitar, smaller and shallower than an OM but still with a full scale neck

From the dark look of the wood used for the main part of the TW45's back and sides you might think it's rosewood, but it isn't – it's laminated mahogany, left natural on the inside but stained a dark colour on the outside with the finish so opaque that you can't really see any grain. Around the back is the TW45's main visual hook – a wide wedge of curly, crazy-grained quilted ash veneer driven up the middle, like the centre section of the back on a Martin D35. Though the colour of the ash is matched elsewhere on the guitar by the plain maple body and neck binding, some might feel it looks a little surprising against all that dark-stained mahogany – like a wodge of Cheddar driven into a chocolate cake. Still, it's striking-looking stuff.

The TW45 has a solid spruce top, gloss-finished like the rest of the ➔

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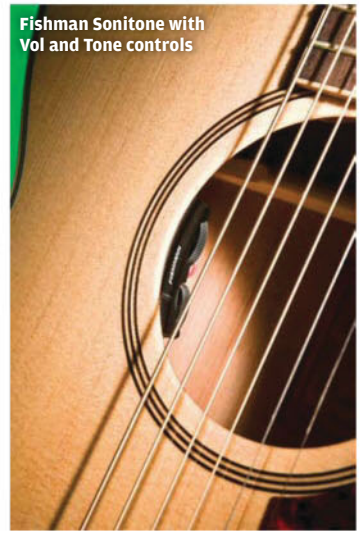
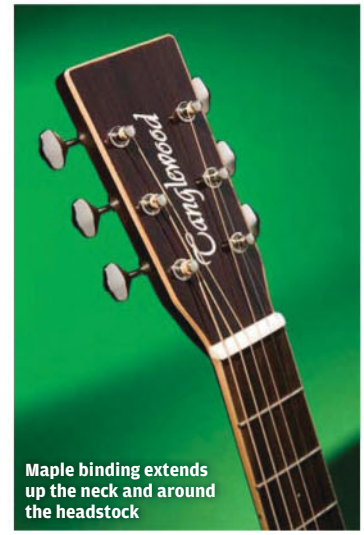
Takamine
GN30CE-NAT
Cutaway mini jumbo with solid spruce top, laminated back and sides, a rounded cutaway and Takamine's TP-4TD electro system
RRP **£319**

The back features a super-quilted ash veneer


Fishman Sonitone with Vol and Tone controls



Maple binding extends up the neck and around the headstock

body, with an ABS and maple soundhole rosette, a stylised tortie scratchplate, and a chunky rosewood bridge in Tanglewood's familiar 'flying eagle' shape with a compensated bone saddle. Neck angle is healthy, the action is fine, and there's plenty of saddle.

As for the neck, it's a very easy-playing slim C shape with a rounded heel and matt finish (with a bit of a sharp ridge where it meets the gloss inside the cutaway – but mostly the finish quality is fine). The fingerboard is rosewood with tasty tiny dot position markers on the front and dark dot side markers in the maple neck binding. The headstock is maple-bound too, and has a Martin-style carved dart volute behind the nut and a set of nickel-plated vintage-style open-gear tuners. The nut is bone, and well-cut, and with frets that are really nicely-fitted and shaped it's a decent player all the way up the fingerboard with no problems at all. The Tanglewood website mentions D'Addario EXP strings but here a headstock hangtag proclaims the presence of Elixirs; at a guess, they're Nanoweb 12-53's in phosphor-bronze.

Sound

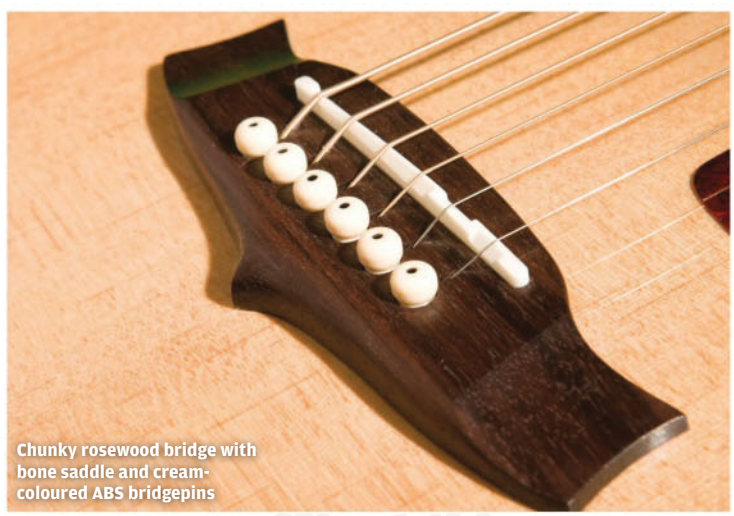
Two things tend to happen as you play a guitar for a few minutes: it warms up, especially as a brand new instrument, and of course all of us tend to instinctively adapt to wring the best from what there is. The first impression of the TW45 is that it's somewhat shallow and boxy-sounding; quick and fairly loud for its small body size, but a touch on the light and tinny side. After a little time that characteristic seems to recede and reveals itself again only when you strum, but when played lightly it's quite a nice fingerpicker or combined fingers/pick instrument in a modern, slightly spangly manner. It's also good in the mids and up the neck, and it works very well for more old-timey thumbpick styles... in fact under these conditions it's got a thunky, snappy midrange that makes it a far better small-body Gibson soundalike than a fair few L-00 copies we could name. Now that was unexpected.

The TW45 comes with a Fishman Sonitone undersaddle pickup with an output jack in the endpin (and a second strap button in the heel, which is good to see), plus a budget battery holder in a bag on the neckblock, and volume and tone control wheels tucked inside the soundhole. All that can realistically be said is that it's a perfectly functional system in the undersaddle Fishman camp, with no string balance problems at all and controls that work well.

Verdict

The TW45 EG E is a lightweight, compact guitar with an easy-playing neck. It's a good looker for the money, with the bonus of a reasonable undersaddle pickup system with convenient soundhole controls. The overall sound failed to impress us as much as the Java TWJF E reviewed late last year, but we think it works for light-handed fingerstyle and, conversely, heavy-handed thumbpick abuse, and like all Tanglewoods it's a well-judged package, and a hard guitar to dislike.

The TW45 sounds a little boxy but it's quite a nice fingerpicker and works well for more old-timey thumbpick styles


Chunky rosewood bridge with bone saddle and cream-coloured ABS bridgepins

FINAL SCORE	
TANGLEWOOD TW45 EG E	
Build Quality	**17**/20
Playability	**18**/20
Sound	**15**/20
Value for money	**16**/20
Looks	**16**/20
TOTAL	**82%**

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GODIN
Shifter Classic 5-String

Affordable and properly good five-strings are rare, but this Godin comes with great woods and Canadian build quality. Review by **Gareth Morgan**

You may be familiar with Godin Guitars via the picture of Roger Waters playing one of their Multiac acoustic/electrics, but this Canadian company makes a wide variety of instruments, including basses. In 1970 Robert Godin (pronounced 'Go-dan') bought into a fledgling guitar building business run by carpenter Norman Boucher, selling guitars literally from the back of a van, but Godin left in 1978, establishing LaSiDo, the parent company producing guitars under his name, initially from a small factory in La Patrie, Quebec, Canada. After struggling through the '80s and early '90s, their guitars gradually acquired wider popularity and LaSiDo became the largest manufacturer of acoustic instruments in North America.

Today, Godin swims against the current wave of outsourcing production to cheaper global locations, maintaining their manufacturing base in North America via five different locations in Quebec and one in New Hampshire, USA. As well as the Multiac and other acoustic models, they produce a variety of solidbody electrics including the single-cutaway Icon Series and the Strat-influenced Passion. They also make solidbody basses, their home being the Performance Series, from which comes the Shifter Classic five-string we have for review this month.

Most Godin instruments are based on familiar shapes, and the company has stuck to it's principles with the Shifter Classic. It offers a different take on its sister Shifter (a model notable for combining classic looks with no less than three soapbar single-coil alnico pickups), but does it without altering its very successful character.

The Shifter has an unusual six-bolt neck fixing

The chrome elephant ear tuners are arrayed in 4 + 1 layout

The slim, shallow neck plays with ease – you could thrash away on this bass for hours and not feel any fatigue

The body is a chunky slab of Canadian Laurentian basswood with a cool black burst finish; a rather appealing crème brulee option is also available for an extra hundred quid. The shape tracks the Precision form but there's a tiny touch of Mustang Bass around the horns, and it comes with a generous ribcage chamfer and a very subtle slope for the forearm. The pickguard is Mustang-like along the top edge too, but it's cut away at the point where the Fender's scratchplate might morph into a chrome control plate. The result ends up a bit like the guard on an old Music Man Sabre bass. The body is about 2mm thicker than a P-Bass or Jazz, but the weight is manageable for a five-string at just over 10lbs.

Check out the flip side and you'll find the rock maple neck is secured via six bolts through a neck plate divided into two sections. We're not sure why, but we say 'vive le difference'. The neck itself is a slim, shallow 'C' contour that feels really comfy under the hand and plays with extreme ease; you could thrash away on this bass for hours and not feel any fatigue. At the far end you'll find a headstock, well-recessed for the requisite string break-angle ↦

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FACTFILE

Godin Shifter Classic 5-String Bass

DESCRIPTION
Solidbody bass. Made in North America
PRICE **£649 inc. gig bag**

BUILD **Canadian Laurentian basswood body, bolt-on rock maple neck with 20 medium jumbo nickel frets on a maple fingerboard. Godin high ratio tuners and Godin Double Function bridge. Chrome hardware**

ELECTRICS **Passive with two Godin Passive J pickups, one volume and one tone control, four-way pickup configuration switch**
LEFT-HANDERS **No**
FINISH **Black burst, crème brulee (at £749)**
RANGE OPTIONS **Four-string Shifter Classic at £549 in black and £649 in crème brulee; 5-string in crème brulee, £749. Also Godin Shifter in 4- and 5-string versions, prices from £799 for a USB port-equipped model to £749 for 4-string and £799 for a 5-string**

SCALE LENGTH
864mm/34"
NECK WIDTH
Nut 46mm
12th fret 63.5mm
DEPTH OF NECK
First fret 19mm
12th fret 22mm
STRING SPACING
Nut 11mm
Bridge 17mm
ACTION AS SUPPLIED
12th fret treble 1.5mm
12th fret bass 2mm
WEIGHT
4.6kg/10.9lbs

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RRP **£406**

Sandberg
California TT 5-string
If you fancy a boutique bass then this high-quality German-built active five-string is a must-try
RRP **£1441**

Two passive single coils are linked to a four-way selector

Excellent playability, decent sounds and an unbelievable price make the Godin Shifter Classic an enticing option

over the white Graph Tech nut, with a design that's a nice variation on the classic slanted-straight-edge/wavy-edge melange. It carries a set of five chrome Godin Classic Style high-ratio tuners organised in the popular four up/one down configuration, with a chrome string tree to improve the angle of the A, D and G strings. The neck is all-maple and houses 20 medium jumbo nickel frets and a set of black dot markers on both face and top edge.

Godin's Double Function bridge lets you choose between stringing the Shifter in through-body or toploader style, while the pickups comprise a pair of the company's Passive J pickups. Godin feels this layout is a better option for the five-string (the four-string Shifter Bass has a P/J combination) as it should help focus the sound if the B string – and the quality of the B string response is generally the difference between an okay five-string and a merely good one. Two knurled chrome dials control volume and tone, and a chrome four-way switch allows you to solo individual pickups via position 1 (neck) and 4 (bridge), or run both in series (2) or parallel (3).

Sounds

Whether sitting or standing there are no issues when it comes to balance, although it's amazing how noticeable an extra 2mm of mass is after a little time. Still, the Shifter is plenty comfortable on lap or strap, the neck is beautiful to play, and when you plug in, the sounds are definitely good.

All four pickup-selection starting points are decently volume-matched. In position 2 (both pickups in series) the sound is cloaked in darker low mids, giving plenty of solid, punchy impact; at the business end, the B string speaks cleanly and clearly with an earthy edge, and the low strings sound wide enough with a dark, growling definition. In the highs the clarity is excellent with just enough cut and bite, but the G string won't really spank when you attack it – it has that slightly choked response we've come to know from a P-type bass. Backing off Tone provides two or three variations, all based on a gradual re-orientation to low frequencies – a softer and ultimately woolly tone that'll work where filling space is important.

Position 3 gives both pickups in parallel and it's a far brighter, more modern-sounding setting with bags more harmonics. There's more high mid-zing across the D and G strings, but it's controlled, so it really helps with the definition. There's also quite a lot less bottom end weight and colour – the B-string is pleasantly crisp and raspy – which, together with the high-mid, leaning, gives a tone heavy on aggressive snarl from the low strings and bright and snappy in the midrange, and a slap assault on the G string makes an acceptably nasty noise. Where Series mode puts us in the mood for traditional pop, rock and blues, we're on a far more contemporary footing here.

With individual pickup settings there's a pleasing earthy tone from the neck pickup with a hint of acoustic quality, conservative highs and a sense of darkness in the midrange which pulls you inexorably in an old-school blues and soul direction. The bridge pickup is the thinnest setting with reduced treble response, more of a burpy gurgle, and a rubbery centre to the core of the note.

Verdict

The combination of excellent playability and a straightforward roster of decent sounds, combined with an unbelievable price for a bass made in North America, make the Shifter Classic an enticing option. The B string isn't quite top-notch, but it's certainly heading in that direction. It's well put-together and the classic template has been sensibly tweaked in certain places but, equally sensibly, left alone in others. All in all, this is an excellent option for anyone wanting to dive into the murky world of the low B on a budget.

Bridge offers the option of two string loading methods

The Godin is available with either a rosewood or a maple board

FINAL SCORE	
GODIN SHIFTER CLASSIC 5-STRING BASS	
Build Quality	**18**/20
Playability	**19**/20
Sound	**16**/20
Value for money	**17**/20
Vibe	**16**/20
TOTAL	**86%**

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DARKGLASS ELECTRONICS

Duality Fuzz Engine

Bass fuzz is a bad, dangerous and beautiful thing. From Finland via Seattle comes a new box of blendable mayhem. Review by **Gareth Morgan**

We really liked the Darkglass Microtubes B3K distortion pedal (see our review in the August 2012 issue, Vol 23/11); in fact, we thought it was one of the best overdrives currently out there. The proprietor of Darkglass is Douglas Castro, a Chilean bass player who relocated to Finland. He's very much taught himself to build pedals, fired by a fertile design imagination and the necessary technical skills. Most importantly, he couldn't get the sound he wanted from the gear he had available, so he felt he was left with no choice. Darkglass pedals are now made in Seattle, USA, which hopefully means we'll get our hands on more of them. Let's take a look at the latest from Mr Castro, the Darkglass Duality fuzz pedal.

Darkglass say the Duality fuzz 'allows selecting and blending between a classic sounding, saw-tooth shape-shifting circuit and a high gain, thick and brutal one'. These can be used individually for straight fuzz or blended for weirder and more wonderful noises.

Four controls are provided to do this: Level, which sets the output level of the effected signal; Blend, for balancing clean and fuzzed signals; Filter, a variable low pass filter or LPF (an LPF is a filter that passes low-frequency signals and attenuates signals with frequencies higher than the cut off frequency), for more or less harmonic content with varied levels of presence and edginess; and finally the Duality control, which selects and mixes the two fuzzes – to the left for old-school, to the right for modern.

All of this housed in a brushed steel box 49mm high including the controls, 71mm wide including the sockets and 110mm deep, weighing 300g/0.66lbs. Unscrew the back to change battery or use mains power via the appropriate socket; input and output jack sockets are also in residence.

Sounds

The Duality is similar and yet different to 3Leaf's YD reviewed this month, most noticeably at the maxed-out extremes, where the carnage is just that bit bloodier, the destructive noise that created it a little wilder. The Blend control means that whatever you do to spark your tone can be the essence of or another colour on your tonal palette. Turning Duality and Filter to the right uncorks variations with fizzing highs that detonate in your face and a nasty, snarling aggression with a slicing attack and lead-synth leanings – if you're looking to simulate your favourite wailing guitar-slinger, this is place to look. Filter control to the right is all cutting harmonics, one offshoot being fatter, more immediately bass playing-oriented noises. You still get a crunching edge and a white noise melee that orbits your note like storms around Jupiter, but it's more obviously attached to its core, rather than acting like some violent harbinger. Furthest left on Filter and Duality is a fat, buzzing behemoth, and winding Filter clockwise slowly eases you into serious death metal, which is rather fun.

Verdict

This is an excellent fuzz pedal. While you can create synth bass-like effects, it colours your instrument's tone as opposed to morphing it closer to another's, although this doesn't mean there isn't plenty of distorted madness available if you so desire. The Duality can get wild and excessive, and all this fun can be attenuated or afforded world domination via the Level and Blend controls. The asking price of £185 is heading towards pro level but what you're getting is a handwired, top-notch fuzz pedal that's worth every penny.

FINAL SCORE

DARKGLASS DUALITY BASS FUZZ	
Build Quality	**18**/20
Usability	**18**/20
Sound	**18**/20
Value for money	**17**/20
Vibe	**18**/20
TOTAL	**89%**

FACTFILE

Darkglass Duality Fuzz Engine

DESCRIPTION **Dedicated bass guitar fuzz pedal. Made in USA**
RRP **£185**

CONTROLS **Volume, Tone, Sustain, mini-toggle switch for three modes (Bass Boost, Norm, Dry). True bypass, battery or 9V p/s (included) operation**

DIMENSIONS **110mm x 71mm x 49mm**
WEIGHT **0.3kg/0.66lbs**
FINISH **Bare w/black top**

CONTACT **Bass Direct**
01926 886433
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Markbass
Bass Tube Marker
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3LEAF AUDIO

You're Doom Dynamic Harmonic Device fuzz

Seeking synthy splatter, explosive detonations, sandpaper grind and the sound of an electric hedge-cutter? Review by **Gareth Morgan**

We previously encountered 3Leaf Audio by way of our review of their GR2 Envelope Filter in our August 2012 issue (Vol 23/11). The GR2 was essentially an upgrade of the Lovetone Meatball, an envelope filter made in small numbers in the UK that was the stompbox equivalent of a 1950s computer: the size of a small house, with unfathomable controls. 3Leaf proprietor Spencer Doren from Seattle developed his 'Groove Regulator' unit as a simplified version. We really liked it, and are hoping to experience the same emotion with 3Leaf's new You're Doom ('You Are Doom') fuzz pedal.

While fundamentally a fuzz pedal, 3Leaf says the YD 'responds to playing dynamics to create vintage synth-inspired sounds', and that it's suited to all instruments. The mayhem is contained within a hot-rolled steel box 54mm high, 64mm wide and 129mm deep and weighing 440g/0.9lbs. Connectivity is via In and Out jack sockets and there's a 9v DC power socket (this unit is mains power only).

There are four basic controls. On the top are Volume, for varying the level of fuzz, and Mix, for balancing clean and dirty signals. On the bottom row, Gain sets the gain of the fuzz signal (traditional mayhem to the right and 'weird, foldback-like sounds' to the left), while Tone is essentially akin to a two-pole low pass filter on an old synth; rotating it clockwise decreases the level of upper harmonics. Otherwise, aside from the soft-touch stomp switch and the red 'on' LED, there's the Shape switch, which 'alters the EQ curve of the fuzz'. Up is flat and full and lively; down gives bassy, scooped mids.

Sounds

You'll hear exactly what 3Leaf means by 'vintage synth-inspired sounds' straight away. With all controls at 12 o'clock, the YD has that electric hedge-cutter sound in abundance. There's a rich, chocolatey quality with punch and spiteful snap with the Shape switch up, and rolling Tone to the left thins the tone and focuses the incendiary aggression – playing a run of staccato notes is akin to a rapid series of sharp explosive detonations. Dial Tone the opposite way and the fuzz slinks into the background, becoming more of a fizzy flavour. You can also achieve any degree of blend with any setting via the Mix dial.

Synth-wise, we managed to get pretty close to a tone similar to the synth bass on Earth Wind & Fire's *Let's Groove* (Vol centre, Mix 3, Gain 9 and Tone 3), and for those doing party gigs, Shape down, Vol and Mix at 1, Gain at 9 and Tone at 12 will get you close to the chunky sandpaper sound you need for the synth line on Maroon 5's *Moves Like Jagger*.

So, for the majority of uses, Shape switch up produces thinner, brighter ultra-toxic sounds, and Shape down is wider and softer. There's loads of good stuff in here and the potential to lose hours experimenting with variations.

Verdict

As you can probably tell, we had a little too much fun with 3Leaf's YD. In terms of dynamics altering the feel, we found this to be more about your phrasing than weight of playing, but however you approach it, there are plenty of excellent variations on tap, from whiney, power-tools lead sounds to gloopy rumbles with various degrees of buzz. Sure, it's at the furthest extent of what you might dream of paying for a fuzz unit, but the YD is more than good enough to justify the outlay and much more than just a simple fuzz pedal.

FINAL SCORE

3LEAF AUDIO YOU'RE DOOM FUZZ PEDAL	
Build Quality	**18**/20
Usability	**18**/20
Sound	**18**/20
Value for money	**17**/20
Vibe	**18**/20
TOTAL	**89%**

FACTFILE

3Leaf Audio You're Doom Dynamic Harmonic Device

SPECS **All-instruments fuzz pedal. Made in USA**
RRP **£180**

CONTROLS **Volume, Mix, Gain and Tone controls, mini toggle Shape switch. True bypass, 9V p/s only (not included) operation**

DIMENSIONS **129mm x 64mm x 59mm**
WEIGHT **0.44kg/0.9lb**
FINISH **Raw hot rolled steel**

CONTACT **Bass Direct 01926 886433 www.bassdirect.co.uk**

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Chunk Systems
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This gated bass fuzz is handmade in Australia. It's a high-quality, versatile unit with a good,easy to find selection of fuzz tones from classic to metal
RRP **£229**

MXR
Bass Blow Torch
The Blow Torch is a highly controllable and very versatile pedal with a three-band EQ and a useful blend control
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Electro-Harmonix
Bass Big Muff Pi
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When it comes to the game of guitars, Tee Kay is holding one of the best hands *Guitar & Bass* has seen in a good long while – a rare and tasty line-up of blue-chip archtops, thinlines and solidbodies. Lars Mullen hears all about it

This month *Private Collection* is paying a visit to Tee Kay, a guitar player who has never let mere geography get in the way of fulfilling his lifelong passion for great American and British blues, rock and jazz. Tee Kay grew up in Lebanon during the '60s and initially became hooked on the sound of the great British blues boom. With the chance to witness gigs by his heroes such as Alexis Korner and John Mayall and the Bluesbreakers only a very, very distant possibility, he instead fed his passion by haunting the local record shops, sharing his knowledge with friends and, of course, by reading various guitar magazines.

As with so many before him, Tee Kay's fascination with the new blues wave of the '60s led him inexorably to discovering who and what had inspired those players in the first place. 'I was lured more towards the roots of the blues,' he explains, 'and from then on, I went back in time and researched many of the early black musicians from Chicago and further back to the Mississippi Delta – the ones who had first inspired a lot of the more modern blues players. I also became fascinated by early jazz players... I still love Wes Montgomery's guitar work, and people like Miles Davis too. My parents were musically-minded and were always playing blues and jazz records from that era.

'All the music I seemed to like always had a big guitar sound, and I became interested in how the contrasting sounds of the guitar could vary so much depending on what guitar or amp was used. I hung out with a lot of local bands and learnt about their guitars and equipment, dreaming that one day I would either be in a band or own a fine instrument like the ones they played.

'Back then I had a half-decent nylon-strung acoustic, which was a pretty good student model and fine for basic open chords, but I still had the dream of one day owning a famous brand. In my own pretend world, I assembled mock guitars from discarded gear or bought cheap electric models to reassemble and put a famous logo on the headstock to make them look like the real thing!

'To this day all the music I'm interested in has a core blues and jazz element to it, but I wouldn't say that has totally dominated which guitars I have chosen to be in my collection. However, I do adore Gibson archtops and big bodied semi-acoustics – the guitars which played such a major part in early blues and jazz – and also the solidbodies as played over the years by so many blues artists like the three Kings, Albert, Freddie and BB.'

If Tee has a favourite guitar, it's the blonde 1969 Gibson L-5CESN he's pictured holding in the photograph above. 'It seems to be the one I feel the most at home with and the one I go to for inspiration for most styles of music,' he explains. 'The humbuckers on these maple guitars – especially the neck pickups – seem to go effortlessly from old to modern blues and jazz, and the neck profile and playability

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A 1963 Gibson ES-355TDC and a wonderful sunburst 1960 ES-335TD

on this guitar just seems to work for me every time. It was also a number one choice for many of the early high-profile players, and it's now a vintage model, of course.

'I've also always loved '50s and '60s Gibson thinline models. They were played by a host of people, from the original big jazz bands to blues and rock'n'roll players. They were very modern-looking guitars when they were introduced... quite a contrast to the earlier deep-bodied archtops.

'For me, the stereo Gibson ES-355 has always been the Freddie King guitar. My one is a '63 in cherry with the ebony fingerboard, the six-way Varitone switch and the Maestro vibrola. My friend Otis Grand – who I think is one of the best UK-based blues players – often borrows this one to use live.

'The ES-335 was of course the cheaper version, but it's just about everybody's favourite thinline Gibson, and it was put on the map by a lot of modern electric players like Alvin Lee and of course Eric Clapton. This one dates from 1960 and it's one of the most collectable thinlines I've got. It has the classic thin 1960 neck, dot markers, a stop tailpiece, a pair of PAFs and the early long pickguard, and looks wonderful in this exceptionally clean tobacco sunburst finish.

'Here's another Gibson thinline, an ES-350T made in 1956 with a maple body, a flamed maple top and a Brazilian rosewood fingerboard. The P90 pickups have this very sweet and detailed clarity. It's a very lively and versatile guitar, and it's at home on all sorts of styles... even Chuck Berry used one of these. This one here is one of only 62 produced in maple and it's a kind of a precursor to the short-scale Byrdland model next to it, which is a '69 in sunburst with gold hardware and a pair of humbuckers.

'The next two Gibsons are an ES-295 from 1957 and a ES-225TDN, also built in '57. The 295 is from the famous Scott Chinery collection. He was one of the biggest collectors in the USA, and would only buy the best of the best, so as you can guess it's in superb condition.

'The extra frills on the ES-295 launched it towards being more of a top-end model, and it's always been regarded as the Scotty Moore model, as he used one as his main guitar when he worked with Elvis Presley. This one is quite rare as it's got a pair of factory PAFs, and the gold finish is in really good order. It's real gold paint, so finding one this clean is a task in itself. It's not mint... there are some small lacquer cracks appearing, but if it had been perfect I wouldn't have bought it, as it would surely have been refinished.

'The ES-225 was a simple, no-frills model, more a budget version of the thinline range. A lot of the up-and-coming blues guys in Chicago and the Midwest can be seen with this particular model in early photographs. They're not easy to find as a lot were not worth repairing if they were damaged, and they were often broken down for parts. This is a really sweet-sounding guitar. The P90s seem to be extra loud for some reason, and I'm really comfortable with the big neck. I play this one a lot!

Close cousins: a '56 ES-350 and a 1969 Byrdland

A '57 Gibson ES-295 and a '57 ES-225

A 1964 Gibson Tal Farlow and a mid-'60s Gibson Johnny Smith

1956 Gibson ES-175N and a '52 Gibson ES-5

'Most of my guitars are pretty clean for their age. A lot of dealers would claim that they are mint, but they're not, because they have been played. For me they've got just the right amount of wear, like the patina on the hardware, but I do like the wood to be in top condition without any buckle marks or serious dents.

'Some arrive a bit gritty and dirty, so I just take them apart and clean and polish out any greasy marks with just a clean cloth. Polishing products can harm bare wood; some of these guitars have developed fine lacquer cracks through age and I really don't want any polish getting into the wood. I'm suspicious of any "as new" vintage guitars with perfect finishes, unplayed frets and pristine hardware. Some collectors will say the sound and the tone is more important than the condition... well, I like to have both!

'I'm not a big collector of signature guitars, and during the '50s and '60s there weren't actually that many produced, but I do have a few, like this 1964 Gibson Tal Farlow. Farlow was a fine jazz player who was also known as "the octopus" because of his large hands and wide spread over the fingerboard.

'This guitar is built in the true tradition of early Gibson archtops and it has some very distinctive appointments like the scroll inlay around the Venetian cutaway, J-200-style "crest" position markers inlaid upside down, and a wooden plaque in the tailpiece with Tal's name engraved on it. The one I have was actually ordered by Farlow himself with an extra-large headstock.

'Here's a Gibson dedicated to the fantastic American jazz guitarist Johnny Smith, who played with all the greats and wrote *Walk, Don't Run*, a 1959 hit for the Ventures. He specified that he didn't want any holes drilled in the body, so the mini humbuckers and controls were all part of the scratchplate assembly. This guitar dates from '65 and has a really nice timbre, both acoustically and through an amp, although the mini-humbuckers are a bit prone to feedback at higher volume levels.'

Blonde finish Gibsons from the '50s are among the most collectable of all, and Tee Kay has a few more yet to show us. 'The '56 ES-175 is another Chinery collection guitar, and the rarity factor is really in the blonde finish and the P90 pickups. There aren't many blonde models built as early as this, when the ES-175 was the workhorse model of every jazz man from Joe Pass onwards.

'With three P90s, and again with a blonde finish, this Gibson ES-5 dates from 1952 and it's got an exceptionally wide range of tones. Each pickup has a separate volume control, and there's just one master tone control. This particular model was used by a host of great players from blues legend T-Bone Walker through to Frank Zappa. This is the actual guitar featured in the comprehensive *Gibson Electrics* reference book by AR Duchossoir. Otis Grand found this one for me... I can't thank him enough.

'I have a '97 Jimmy Page Les Paul Standard, which is slightly out of character with the vintage theme of my collection – in fact, it's the newest one here. I've always loved Page's work from the early days right up to the Led Zeppelin albums. Modern guitars of this nature can play unbelievably ➔

1997 Gibson Jimmy Page Les Paul and Custom Shop Chet Atkins

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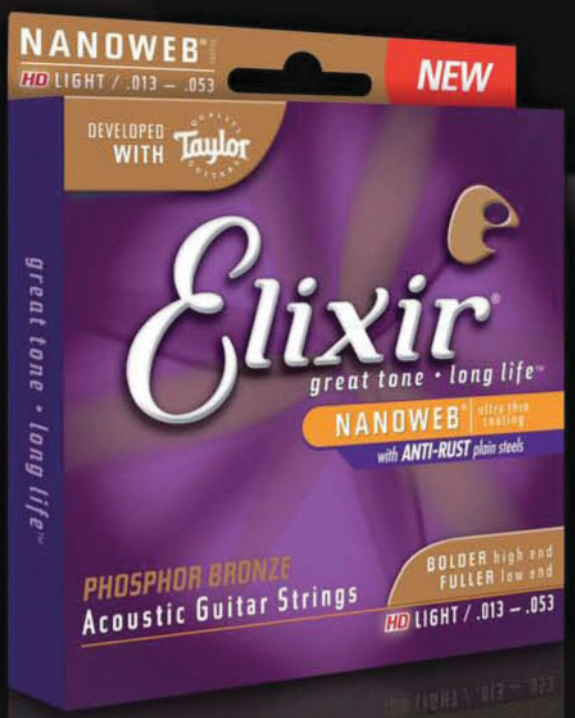

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A sunburst Gibson L-5 from 1937 and a blonde example from 1941

One of the original – and deteriorating – L-5 pickguards

'I don't collect guitars for the sake of making money. I've never sold a single guitar, and I'm not planning to. I enjoy every one'

well, and this one looks good with the tiger stripe maple top, and it's really loud, too. The various push-pull controls give you a variety of sounds and out-of-phase permutations from the humbuckers.'

Next up is something really spectacular – a Custom Shop Gibson made as a prototype for Chet Atkins himself. 'It's taken some serious work to find some of these guitars,' Tee explains. 'I travel a lot in my job, especially in the USA, where they have a very deep market for vintage guitars.

'Almost every town in the USA has a guitar shop, many of which also have vintage guitars, and a lot of big collectors seem to be over there as well as the key dealers. I've developed a good relationship with a guy based in California called David Brass, who is in fact British. He only deals with serious collectors and he now knows what I like, so I often get a phone call as a first choice on some of the finer guitars that have surfaced after many years, or guitars from high-profile people who are selling things from some incredible collections.

'The Custom Shop Chet Atkins came from the actor Stephen Segal's collection. It was made in 1987. It wasn't one that I was chasing, or even knew about, but when David sent me the specifications, I had to buy it!

'The craftsmanship is quite remarkable, with the large 17" thinline style body and the finest birdseye maple used for the body and the headstock cap, which is inlaid in abalone with the Gibson script logo and Chet Atkins' signature. All the hardware is gold, including Gibson's own Rotomatic tuners with flip-out buttons, and the Tree Of Life inlay goes up the ebony fingerboard all the way to the 19th fret. It's a very unique guitar.

'I don't collect guitars for the sake of making money. I've never sold a single guitar, and I'm not planning to! I enjoy every one and look forward to the times when I can spend the whole day with them in a private and secure lockup, and just take two away at a time to keep in my office to play. So they are rotated on a regular basis.'

Next we travel back in time with the first pair of Tee's unamplified archtops. 'The Gibson L-5 is a delightful model, the epitome of the guitars used in the early big jazz bands. These are highly collectable, but that doesn't necessarily mean very expensive, especially compared to a Fender from the same period.

'I have two L-5s here. This sunburst one is from 1937, and it's called the "Advanced" model because of the larger 17" body, introduced in 1935. It's got gold hardware and a figured bookmatched tiger stripe flame maple top. The other one is a blonde version dating from 1941, formerly owned by the guitar historian Walter Carter, and featured in his book *Gibson: 100 Years Of An American Icon*, and also in his book entirely on L-5s.

'One of the problems on some of these guitars is the pickguard. The nitrocellulose that they're made of breaks down over the years and they shrink, warp and eventually start to crumble. It doesn't happen to every one, so you can't tell if it will or not. This one has been replaced, but I have the original kept in a plastic bag, and you can see how it's gone like brown sugar in places!

'Here are two more from Gibson's L Series. This all-acoustic L-4 from '51 is quite ↔

Beautiful black 1951 Gibson L-4 and a '51 L-7CE with a McCarty pickup

1930 National Style O and a '38 Epiphone Deluxe with DeArmond pickup

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The Strat and its case have both seen a bit of life

A 1957 two-tone sunburst Stratocaster and a '53 Telecaster

rare in factory black. It's lost some of the high gloss on its original finish, but it has the played-in patina that I like very much.

'Next to it is a tobacco sunburst L-7CE, also from 1951. The L-7 was the top of the L range, with fine appointments which included a handcarved solid spruce top and a two-piece solid carved maple body. The neck is two-piece maple with a mahogany centre, and the fingerboard is Brazilian rosewood inlaid with double parallelogram position markers.

'This was of course the early days of the electric guitar, so it's fitted with a "McCarty" pickup. These wonderful guitars were for the guys who played in the rhythm section at the back of those early orchestras and big bands, rather than the louder lead players who were at the front showing of their virtuosity and melody.

'Going way back to when I researched early blues guitarists, I was always fascinated by the sound of a resonator, especially in the hands of a really good slide player. I have a National Style O from 1930; I've kept it clean, but not buffed to perfection. It's still got the player's hue that I feel it should have.

'The 1938 Epiphone Masterbilt Deluxe was an opportunistic buy from a friend who happened to be selling it – I decided it needed to live with my other guitars of the same age! This was an expensive and powerfully loud archtop of its day. At some point a DeArmond floating pickup assembly has been added... it works well, and I won't be taking it off.'

Fenders? Well, yes, Tee's got a couple. But what a couple they are...

'My collection is more or less based on large bodied acoustic and semi-acoustic guitars, and I don't want to own too many solidbodies, but I felt I should have a few classics from two of the major brands,' Tee says. 'The years 1954 and 1957 are renowned as magical ones for Fender Strats, and examples often change hands for six-figure dollar prices. This one is a '57 which once belonged to Richard Gere; it was one of several Strats being auctioned at the same time. It has heavy wear from extensive use throughout its life and it's been aged in all the right places, as you can see on the body, the V neck and maple fingerboard. Luckily, because of the condition, it was being overlooked by the auctioneer, and I managed to buy it for less than the asking price.

'Of all my guitars, it's the easiest one to play. It's ultra-light and it has a natural acoustic resonance that I've not heard before from any solid-bodied guitar. I don't play this one hard as I don't want to lose any wood on the fingerboard... the lacquer is worn away in places and, as I mentioned earlier, none of my guitars have been restored – I'd rather keep them in their natural condition. I wouldn't have bought an archtop in this condition, but it works for this guitar. The case is also proof of years of gigging!

'There's a lot of debate and argument about which is the best Tele to own, but if you want to own just one, I believe it has to be a blonde blackguard '53 like this one, a favourite amongst a lot of players like Bruce Springsteen and Keith Richards. It's renowned as the guitar that solves all the problems in the recording studio when others have failed. This one is in great condition and complete with the ashtray bridge cover. It took an age to find it, but as soon as I saw it, I knew it was the one for me.

'I go on the basis that any serious collector – of anything really, not just guitars – should have some ↦

1963 Gibson SG Standard with sideways Vibrola and a '58 Les Paul Custom Black Beauty

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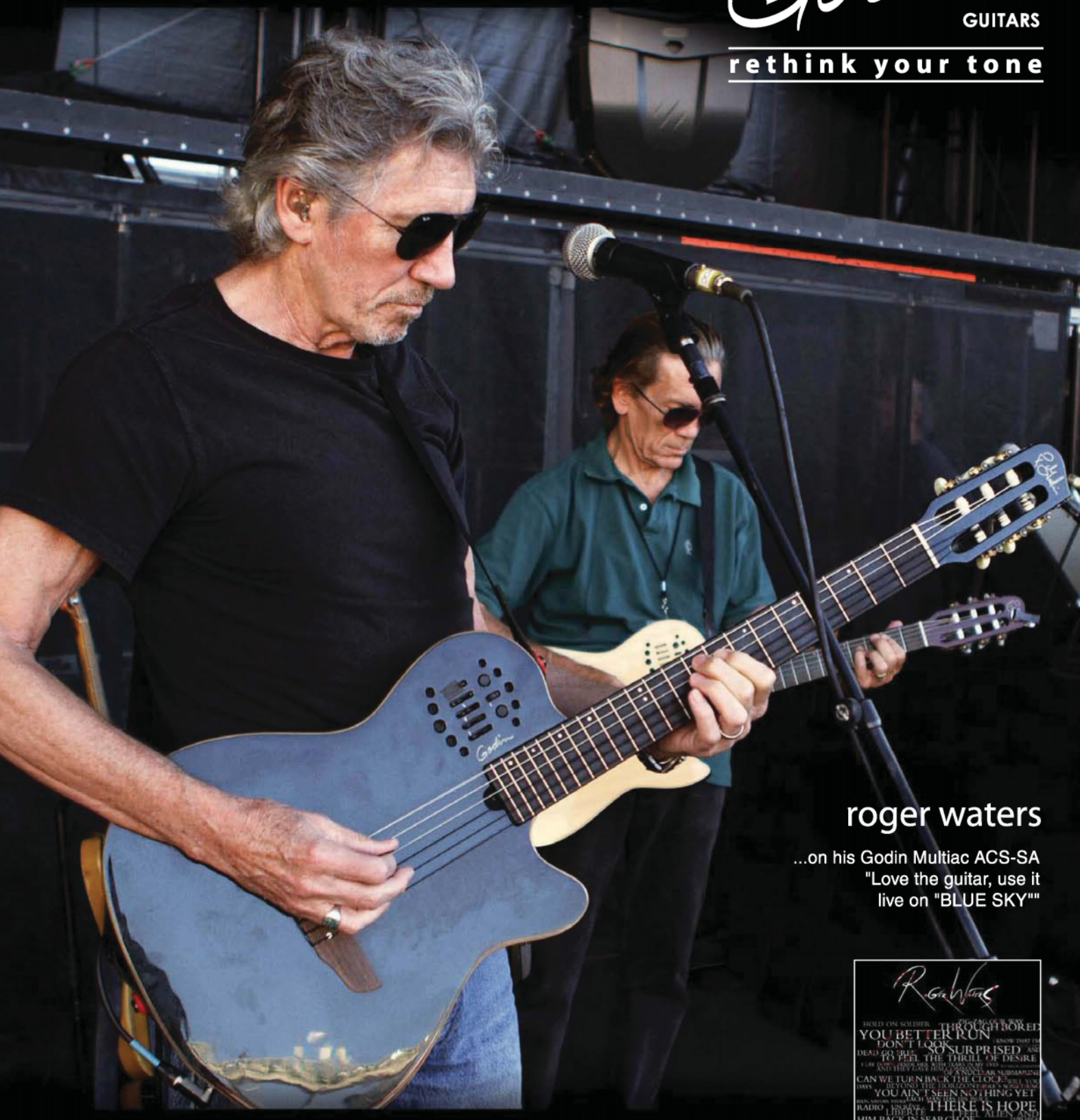

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Ex-Bruce Welch Martin 00-18E from 1959

Walnut-bodied Froggy Bottom Model K Custom

'This is the Martin that Bruce Welch used on all those Shadows records. It's also the guitar that Paul McCartney used to write Yesterday'

form of discipline, otherwise it becomes an addiction. You have to compromise. I could spend a year looking for a certain guitar, and during that time I might see many in various conditions with all sorts of price tags. Sometimes it's important to resist; I might see a good one, but not the one I would like. I've learnt that if you have doubts then you need to back off, as there will be a better one – and when you find that one, the key is not to hesitate, but to pay up and buy it.

'That was the way with two other Gibsons, none of which were high on my target list... they were opportunistic purchases. I had a call again from David Brass, saying he had this immaculate three-pickup Black Beauty Les Paul Custom and an exceptionally clean cherry red SG, both fitted with the sideways vibrato. When I saw them, I bought them both without hesitation... you just don't see guitars of this age and in this condition. Again, they aren't "under the bed" guitars, they've had just the right amount of use. The SG dates from '63 and the Black Beauty, can you believe, dates from '58.'

Acoustic guitars are high on Tee's wish list, although not all are vintage. Some of them are pictured in the photograph on the first page of this article. 'I have a few Martin acoustics, but none are classed as vintage, really... I've found the early ones are overpriced and often in poor condition. So I'm enjoying the modern ones, like a Martin Eric Clapton 000-42 and a Martin Custom Jumbo, both in rosewood, and a D-28. The oldest is a D-35 dating from 1967, which also came from Richard Gere. I travel a lot with these guitars, either on holidays or visiting friends for guitar evenings.

'I also have a Froggy Bottom Custom which I bought from Rudy's Music Stop in New York. I was actually looking for a small-bodied Martin, but just couldn't get comfortable with any of them. I'd been in and out of the shop for days when he eventually said I should try this other make.

'At first the small deep body looked odd to me, but it's built from a gorgeous piece of walnut with fine trimmings in all the right places, and it's very light and vibrant. It was apparently built to the specifications of John Mayer, but for some reason he just didn't collect it. It was more than double the price of the Martins, but I bought it there and then – I was totally smitten.'

Finally, when we think Tee can't better any previous guitar stories, he comes up with something very, very impressive. 'Here we have a Martin 00-18E which I bought from Bruce Welch of the Shadows,' he says proudly. 'He bought it new in 1959, fitted with a soundhole pickup and controls on the lower bout.

'This is the guitar Bruce used throughout his career with Hank Marvin in the Shadows whenever an electrified acoustic guitar was required, so it can be heard on all the Shadows records. It has a very evenly balanced sound... everything sounds wonderful on this guitar.

'It's also featured in the Barry Miles book on Paul McCartney called *Many Years From Now,* where it's confirmed that this was the guitar that Paul used to piece together the song *Yesterday* when he was on holiday in Bruce's villa in Portugal in May 1965. He arrived without a guitar, and Bruce had this Martin, which of course is right-handed, so McCartney had to play it upside down. He quotes in the book, "I think I finished the lyrics about two weeks later, which was quite a long time for me."

'For me, guitar collecting – especially vintage guitar collecting – is a reflection of the older generation, or the baby boomers, for want of a better title. We followed those early bands and were enthralled by their music and the sounds their instruments produced.

'Who knows what will happen to these instruments in future with the next generation? I wonder if they will continue to value them, and if they do, will it be for their craftsmanship, or as antiques? I hope my children and the generations beyond will cherish these guitars as a representation of the music from the '50s and '60s, which created the music of today.'

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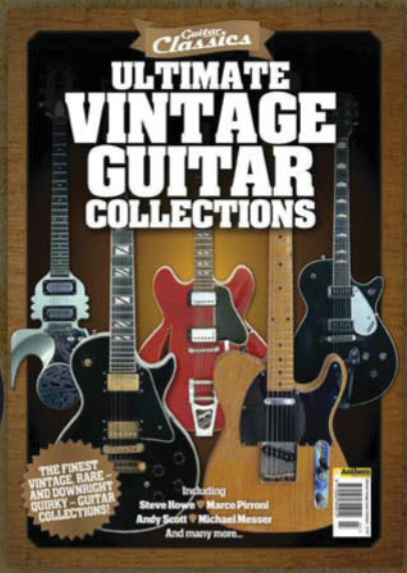

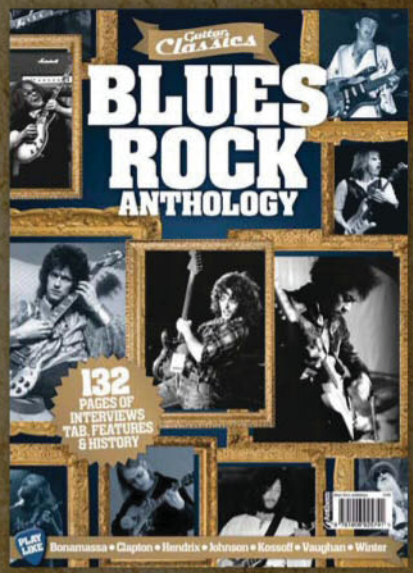

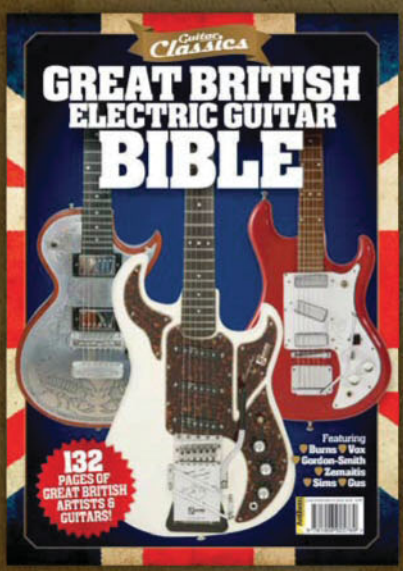

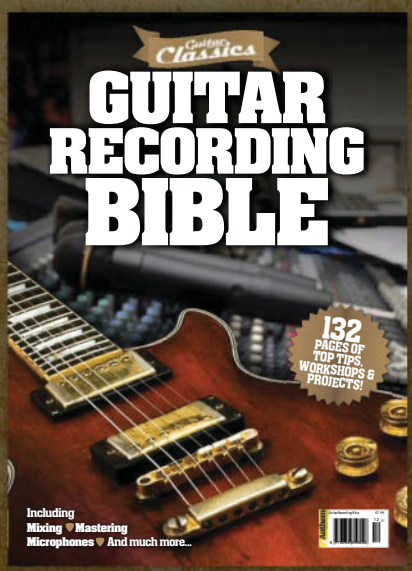

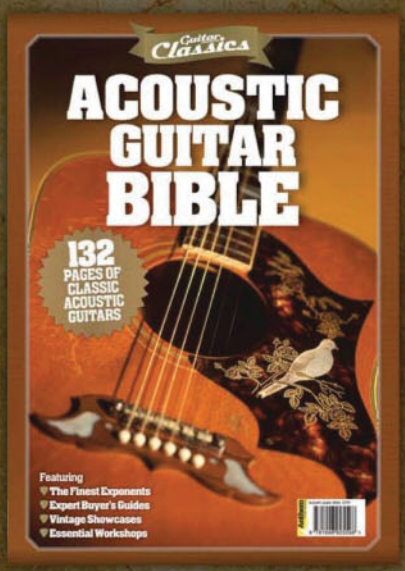

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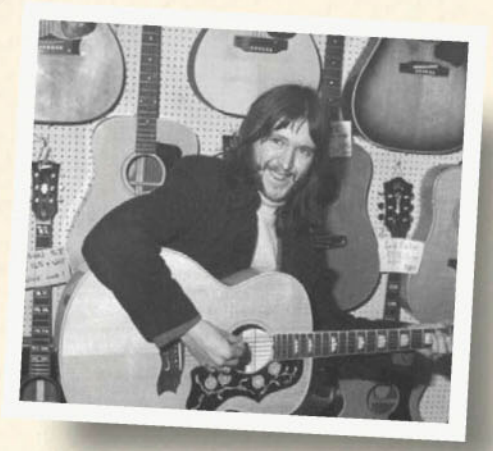

When you tire of Les Pauls and 335s and Strats and Teles, there are always the wackier options. **Sid Bishop** takes an in-depth look at Gibson's stylish Firebirds and Fender's often-overlooked semi-acoustics...

Debuting in 1963, the Firebird was Gibson's response to the problems they were encountering in trying to market a new and modern-looking guitar. They had been struggling, and in desperation enlisted the services of Detroit car designer Ray Dietrich, who, it was hoped, would have a totally fresh approach. Gibson had already experimented with some unconventionally shaped guitars, and just five years previously had produced the Flying V, the Explorer, and the Moderne, albeit in very small quantities. Commercially they proved to be a failure at the time, and Gibson did not wish to get their fingers burned again.

In due course, Dietrich presented his new guitar. Originally to be have been called the Phoenix, it was finally christened the Firebird, and was a little like a rounded-off Explorer but with specially designed mini-humbuckers. They were also fitted with Kluson banjo tuners that projected from the rear of the headstock, seen previously on the EB-1's and early EB-0's, and of course banjos. The neck continued right through the body to enhance sustain, with bridge and pickups all fitted to this same slab of wood on a slightly raised central deck, and the remaining two body halves fitted in the form of 'wings' on each side. It looked a little back-to-front hence this range have become known as the 'reverse body Firebirds'. They proved to be expensive to manufacture, one factor which led to their fairly speedy demise. There were four guitar models, and two complementary long-scale basses designated Thunderbirds, the Thunderbird II bass having one pickup, and the Thunderbird IV bass two. The guitars were the Firebird I, with one mini-humbucker, dot inlays and unbound fingerboard; the Firebird III, with two minis, dot inlays, and short Gibson vibrola; the Firebird V with two minis, trapezoid inlays

Left to right: a 1963 Gibson Firebird I, a 1964 Firebird III, and a Firebird VII

The first Firebirds came with specially-designed mini-humbuckers and Kluson banjo tuners, and had the neck running through the body

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and a Gibson Maestro Vibrola; and lastly the top-of-the-range Firebird VII with three minis, block inlays on an ebony fingerboard plus a Maestro, all gold-plated. Basic finish was a dark-brown sunburst, but custom colours were available as an extra-cost option.

All of these are highly collectable now, but being the rarest, most desired are the Firebird I's and VII's, with slightly fewer than 200 original VII's in existence. I've owned a couple of these in the past. They sound great, but take a bit of getting used to, most being somewhat neck-heavy. As things turned out the Firebirds didn't sell very well, despite being promoted by bands such as the Four Seasons and the Merseybeats. The design was a little 'off-the-wall' for most (although that didn't stop Brian Jones buying one).

After a mere two years a second version was launched. The body was switched around mirror-fashion, and to cut costs the guitars were made with a fixed glued-in neck rather than the original through-neck design. The model numbers were retained, but pickup options were changed. These are known as 'non-reverse' Firebirds, and once more the range consisted of four guitars and two Thunderbird basses. The Firebird I had two P90s, the Firebird III had three P90s, the Firebird V had two mini humbuckers and vibrola, and the VII had gold-plated hardware, three minis and a vibrola. They'd lost their banjo tuners, and reverted to a more conventional Fender-style headstock. Base finish was sunburst with optional custom colours. A 12-string version of the Firebird V also appeared. Although generally better received than the reverse model, they were still never likely to set the world on fire, and were discontinued in 1969 after just four years. Most desired now will be the V's and VII's, though when Gibson reissued this model a few years back they strangely chose the III, offered just in sunburst, white or Pelham Blue. Original '60s non-reverse Firebirds will all fetch reasonable amounts, though never as much as the reverse bodies.

Non-reverse Firebirds. Left to right: a 1965 Firebird I, another Firebird I in sunburst, and a 1968 Thunderbird Bass

Non-reverse Firebirds had bodies switched around mirror-fashion, plus glued-in necks rather than the original through-neck design

In 1972 Gibson decided to reissue the original reverse body style. Selecting the Firebird V as the base model they produced a limited run, ceasing production the following year. The edition was of 366 instruments, and each guitar had a unique edition number on a coin-sized plate screwed in to the upper left bout. For that reason these are known as the 'Medallion' series. The edition totalled a rather peculiar 366 units as 1972 happened to be a leap year, and the plan was to produce one per day. It obviously wouldn't have been cost-effective to make them individually, and they were in fact made in batches. All were in sunburst, though of a slightly paler tone than the original '60s models.

In 1976, America's Bi-Centennial year, Gibson issued yet another run of the 'V' model, all with a red, white, and blue Firebird emblem on the pickguard. The overwhelming majority of these were made in a pale natural mahogany, but optional finishes were black, or white, and sunburst, though few of these were ever produced. Although designated a Bicentennial model, production actually continued until 1978.

Many permutations of the Firebird have been issued in occasional limited editions in later years, and just since 2000 reverse body III's, V's and VII's have appeared, (though sadly not the I's), also the non-reverse III's mentioned earlier. In 2008 a long awaited Johnny Winter tribute model in aged sunburst finish was offered in a limited edition of 50. In 2010 the reverse Firebird V was again reissued, though by 2012 fitted with Steinberger tuners which have the tuning key on the upper face of the headstock. In 2013, a 50th Anniversary model was released. Once again based on the '63 Firebird V, all are finished in Bullion Gold with a black pickguard. There's also a matching gold Thunderbird bass. Any Firebird is well worth adding to your collection. Love them or not, they are strikingly different guitars.

Let's switch from Gibson to Fender. Fender had always been perceived, justifiably, as the world's premier builders of solidbody guitars aimed at the rock'n'roll and country markets. However, the increasing use of slim semi-acoustic guitars, much favoured by the Beatles, the Animals, the Kinks, the Spencer Davis Group and other bands that were part of the early '60s British invasion, had not ↦

escaped Fender's attention. As a result they sought to design a guitar to compete against the likes of Rickenbacker, Gibson's ES-335, Epiphone's Casino and Gretsch's Tennessean and Country Gentleman. This specific market was a significant and expanding one, and Fender wanted a piece of it. They had recruited ace designer Roger Rossmeisl, late of Rickenbacker, in the hope that he would find a solution.

The first fruit of this association was the Fender Coronado, a slim, fully hollowbody guitar, having a symmetrical outline not unlike an Epiphone Casino, but with a bolt-on neck. These were introduced in 1966 and finally dropped in 1971. There were single and double pickup models, also a 12-string and a bass. Uniquely at that time, the pickups were made not by Fender themselves, but by DeArmond. Some of these guitars featured colour-streaked 'Wildwood' finishes, the wood that the bodies were made from having been injected with various dyes as the original tree grew. The usual wide range of custom colours were also available on the Coronados. They do divide opinion; when I first saw one my initial reaction was 'Yuck', though they aren't bad guitars, but certainly no match for a Gibson or Rickenbacker. Many called them cheap looking or ugly, and the bolt on neck didn't help.

Nonetheless Rossmeisl was a skilled guitar builder, and his particular field of expertise was the archtop jazz guitar. As this was another market sector that Fender would have liked a slice of, Rossmeisl was again asked to design something. He in fact came up with two, firstly the Montego, and secondly the broadly similar but higher-specification LTD.

The Montego, a full-bodied cello-style jazz guitar available in single or double pickup versions, debuted in 1967. The bodies were manufactured in Germany and shipped to California for final assembly, which included the pickups and an American made bolt-on neck. Never made in great quantities, only around 100 in total, they had disappeared from the catalogue by 1975.

Next came the more upmarket all-American LTD. Only 36 of these single-pickup LTD archtops were made in 1968 and 1969. They weren't bad-looking guitars, but their downfall was twofold: they were very expensive, and the bolt-on necks virtually guaranteed that traditional jazz players, their most obvious market, would never find them acceptable.

Following the return of Rossmeisl to Germany in the '70s, and refusing to entirely surrender, Fender consulted legendary archtop builders D'Aquisto and Benedetto, and although a limited number of prototypes were built following the designs of those makers, none ever went into full scale production.

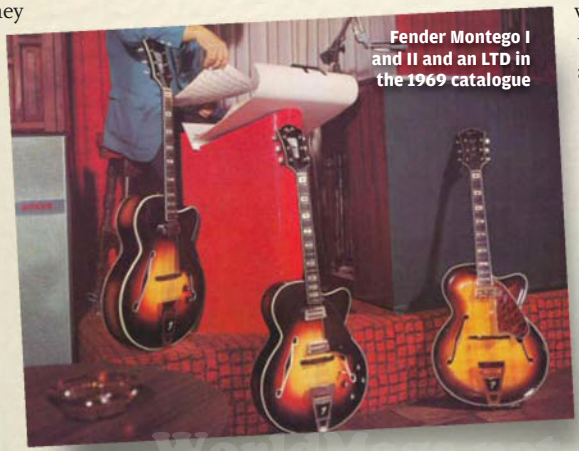
Left, a rare 1969 Fender Montego LTD

Left, a 1968 Fender Wildwood Coronado; right, a 1978 Starcaster

None of these semi-acoustics proved to be great money-spinners for Fender, and they finally decided to focus on what they did best

That was the end of Fender's forays into the jazz guitar world... at least so far.

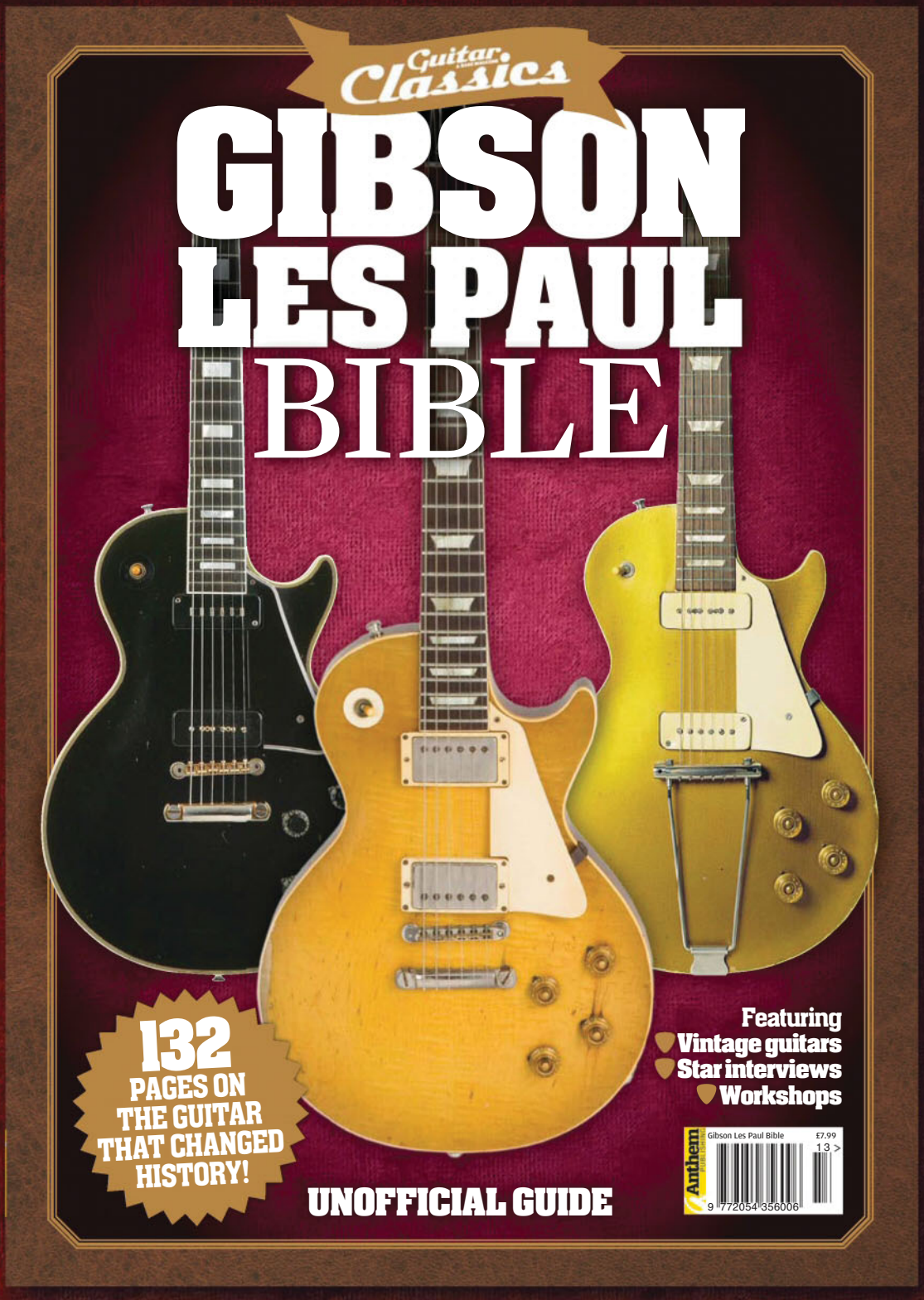
Next came the slimline semi-acoustic Starcaster. This had an offset hollow body and a rather distinctive sculpted single side headstock. It was fitted with two of Fender's then still new-ish humbucker pickups, the same ones that adorned the Telecaster thinline reissue. The Starcaster was introduced in 1974, and appears to have curled up and died by 1980. The first time I saw one of these, once again my initial reaction was 'yuck', though I have to say that in later years my opinion has softened, and I now view them as strangely appealing. Perhaps they were just ahead of their time. None of these semis proved to be great money-spinners for Fender, and they finally decided to focus on what they did best, and leave the semi-acoustic market to other companies who had a better grasp of what was required. Having said all of that, 2013 witnessed Chinese-made reissues of both the Coronado and Starcaster (both in six-string and bass models) as part of Fender's affordable Modern Player series. I wish them the best of luck, and perhaps their day has finally arrived.



Fender Montego I and II and an LTD in the 1969 catalogue

The million dollar question is therefore, 'Should I collect them?' My answer would be 'yes', especially as at the present time prices often remain temptingly low. They're interesting looking guitars too, and although much-maligned, they are of a good useable quality, so bear that in mind. You could certainly do a lot worse.

FROM THE MAKERS OF Guitar & Bass



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Photos: Eva Bensasson

This boot-fair bought power conditioner is still going strong

Nice, but noisy: watch out for old mains-powered effects

Beat the buzz

Is it really possible to eliminate all those annoying hums, buzzes and pops from your recording setup? Yes, it is – and **Huw Price** has some quiet advice

Keeping noise out of your home recording setup requires a little planning and effort, but it's absolutely worth it, no matter how high you're aiming. To greatly simplify things in this article, we're going to break studio noise problems down into two main categories – hum and interference.

Noise is an issue in the studio environment simply because it makes it so much harder to hear what's really going on. If there are low-frequency drones or random electrical glitches coming out of your speakers, this will inevitably mask the finer detail of the music you're trying to record. You'll also be unable to distinguish between noises that are part of your recording system and those that might be coming from a guitar or bass amp, so you might end up recording parts that are too noisy to use. Worse still, you might discover that the noise inherent to your system is actually making its way to your tape machine or hard disk recorder. If it is, you're stuck with it forever on all your recordings – and that's why the noise simply has to go.

Hum

Hum is the most common problem, and it's the low-frequency noise that's related to mains or power supply issues. You can identify this because earth hum, in the UK anyway, will have a frequency of 50Hz, which is within a whisker of a low G note. If there's a problem with a power supply, hum will also occur at multiples of that frequency – ie 100Hz, 150Hz and so on. In the US the hum frequencies will be multiples of 60Hz.

Earth loops and guitar amps

If you've ever tried linking up two guitar amps, you will have encountered hum caused by an earth loop. Loads of people get around this by lifting the earth connection from the mains plug of one amp, but this is dangerous and potentially fatal.

An earth connection should be properly attached to the chassis of any piece of audio equipment. If an electrical fault occurs and a live part of the circuit reaches the chassis, it's then safely transmitted down the mains cable, into the mains plug and then literally goes to ground via a water pipe or a copper spike that has been driven into the earth – and this, of course, should also blow the fuse in your fuse box.

If that live current can't travel to earth, it will travel through you instead – and, make no mistake, if it goes through your heart then you might find yourself on the dead side of unconscious. So we need to find a way to break earth loops without compromising safety in any way.

Simply plugging one of the amps into a different ring main will not cure the hum because all the earth connections in your house will end up at the same point anyway. The only reliable and safe solution I have found to combine two or more amplifiers is a dedicated isolator/splitter. There are plenty of products to choose from, such as the Radial JX2 Switchbone, Roger Mayer's Crossroads, or the Framptone Amp Switcher. Buying one of these might cost a little more than simply lifting an earth connection but you'll get a better sound, you'll probably get the added benefit of amp switching, and it could quite possibly save your life.

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Finding the quiet spot

Single-coil guitar pickups pick up more than just string vibrations: they're also partial to buzzes, electrical noise and garbage from dimmer switches or CRT monitor screens, especially in the control room. The good news is that, like cardioid microphones, pickups are directional. So try slowly turning around until you find the quietest spot, and then hit the Record button.

Identifying the culprit

Finding the cause of an earth loop in a studio setup is more complicated than with a couple of guitar amps because of the sheer number of audio devices and connections involved. However, with a little patience you can get your system running quietly.

Start by unplugging everything – and I mean 'unplugging', not merely switching off, because leaving mains plugs and audio connections in place ensures that the potential for earth loops will still be there.

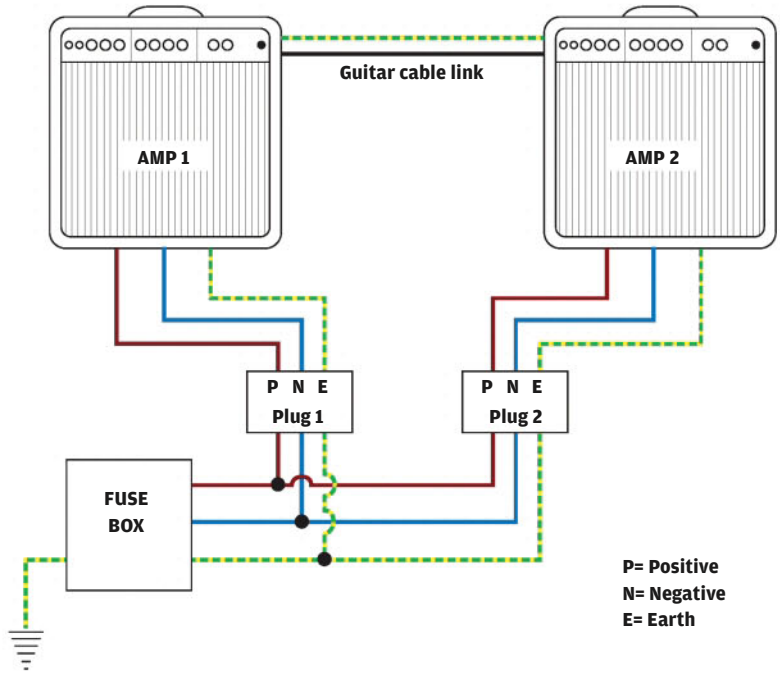
Next, switch on the power amplifier of your monitoring system or your active monitors. If there's nothing wrong with the power supply such as old and leaky smoothing caps, the background noise should be negligible.

If everything's okay, connect your mixing desk or control module to your amp or active monitors by using balanced connections wherever possible. Continue connecting and turning on one piece of equipment at a time in order of priority. You can expect a gradual increase in hiss, but as soon as you hear a sharp increase in hum you've got yourself an earth loop – and the last thing you connected is probably the culprit.

Balanced cables

Hums are endemic in home studios because lots of semi-professional equipment only provides you with unbalanced connections. Whenever you have the option of using balanced connections, use them!

1 HOW AN EARTH LOOP CAN BE CREATED WHEN TWO AMPS ARE LINKED TOGETHER



If live current can't travel to earth then it will travel through your heart, and you might find yourself on the dead side of unconscious

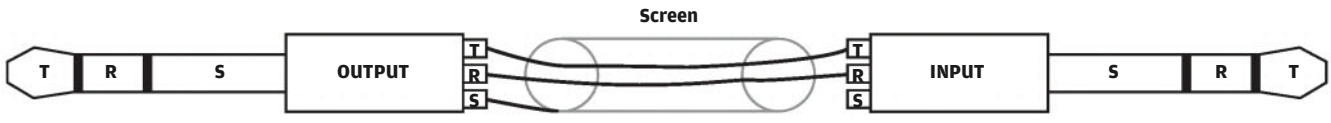
If you encounter an earth loop with balanced interconnects, see Diagram 2. You can simply disconnect the screen connection at one end of the cable – preferably the output end rather than the input – and your live and return path will still be there.

Pseudo-balanced cables

If you're forced to connect a balanced unit with an unbalanced one, you can make up a cable to help minimise hum. Take a look at Diagram 3: assuming we've got a TRS jack at one end and a TS jack at the other, get some twin core and screen cable and use one core to connect the two tips. Use the other core to connect the ring of the balanced jack to the sleeve of the unbalanced jack, and connect the two sleeves using the screen wire. You can try a 1/8W resistor in series with the screen wire to limit hum currents. If you encounter radio frequency interference, try a 100pF capacitor in parallel with the resistor.

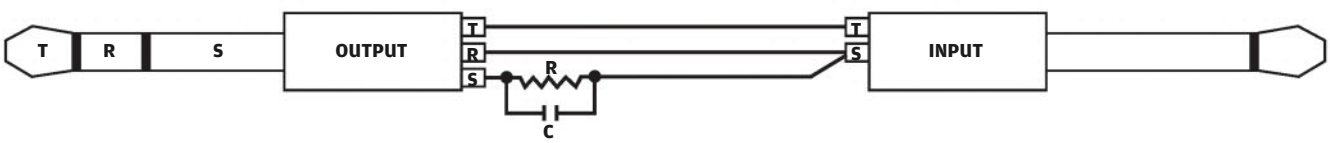
↦

2 BALANCED JACK CONNECTIONS WITH SCREEN DISCONNECTED AT INPUT END



T= Tip R=Ring S=Sleeve

3 HOW TO MAKE A PSEUDO BALANCED CABLE



T= Tip R=Ring S=Sleeve R=100R resistor C=100pf capacitor

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Audio leads should cross power leads at 90 degrees

DI boxes

There are occasions when the only guaranteed way to break that ground loop is to use a DI box. The transformer inside these devices effectively isolates the two circuits, so there's no 'direct' connection. Some might fret about deterioration in sound quality, but the extent of that will largely be down to the quality of the transformer itself. It's not ideal, but sometimes you just have to compromise.

Rackmount problems

Even if everything's properly earthed and all your interconnections are sorted, mounting equipment in racks can reawaken all those gremlins. New earth loops can be created when the chassis of two different bits of kit touch each other; they can even end up connected by the metal mounting strip and the fixing bolts. So test each unit and its connections before racking it up, then test again afterwards. If necessary, try using special Humfree-type rack bolt isolators.

Plan your layout

Before you hook everything up, make sure that you take a little time to draw out a proper design. Wherever possible, you should keep audio cable runs as short as possible. Also, consider the fact that transformers radiate hum fields: the bigger the transformer, the bigger the hum.

Try to keep transformer-loaded equipment like power supplies and amplifiers away from other signal processing equipment. If it's something like a microphone preamp that needs to sit in your equipment rack, try leaving a 1U or 2U space between the preamp and the next piece of kit in the rack. Also, try to keep audio cables well away from mains cables to avoid hum pickup. Avoid running them next to each other for any distance, and if they do have to cross, then make sure they do it at right angles.

Interference

I was engineering in a Spanish studio a few years back with a building site right next door. Not unusually for Spain, the workers had illegally tapped into the main electrical supply, and this spot of free enterprise caused absolute havoc for me. With so many pops and crackles coming down the line whenever they used their construction equipment, everything we recorded sounded like an old 78rpm record.

Maybe you have suffered similar problems when recording at home. Some domestic appliances can be troublesome; in my house the fridge and the tumble drier were always the worst culprits. This was because my studio and kitchen are part of an extension and they previously shared the same electrical ring main. The solution to my problem at home was simple, but it cost me a couple of hundred pounds. I was planning to have a new fuseboard installed anyway, so I asked the electricians to put the old fuseboard in my studio and run a new supply to it. This gave me the potential to run several independent ring mains in my studio room that weren't connected to any other ring in the house.

If this isn't a practical solution for you or if, as with the Spanish studio scenario, the source of the interference is coming from outside your house, you might need to buy a power conditioner.

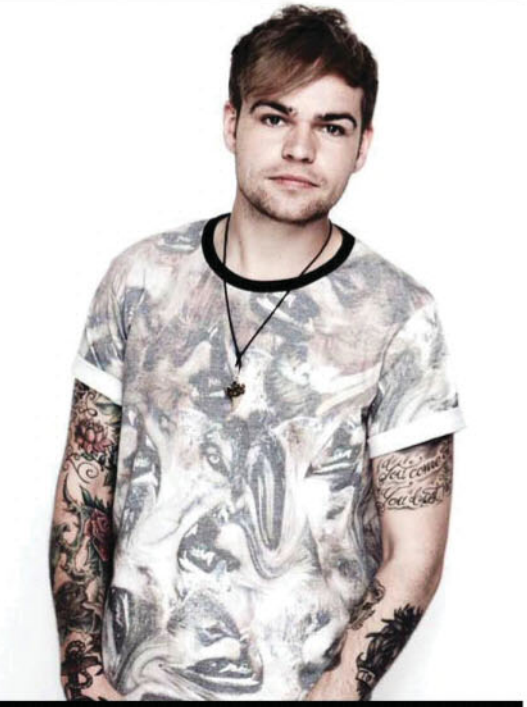
Power conditioners

Power conditioners shouldn't be confused with power regulators – although some of them can do both jobs. Power regulators fix the mains voltage rock solid to compensate for fluctuations in the mains. If you've ever run a guitar amp in Europe at 220V when the amp's voltage selector is set to 240V, you'll know what a difference this can make. A decent power conditioner, on the other hand, should be able to filter out all that dirt that's contaminating your mains supply, so even if your studio is on a shared ring main or you happen to have those dreadful radio and line noise generating light dimmer switches dotted around the place, your audio kit can run clean.

The good news is that you needn't spend a fortune on power conditioning. The ART PB (£49) and SP (£99) both feature eight rear outputs for power cables and wall-wart devices. You'll also get surge and spike protection with RFI and EMI filtering and a front-mounted 15-amp circuit breaker reset switch. Or check out a used Gemini PL-01 or the Samson Powerstrip (£59.70). Power regulators will cost you more: check out the Furman range.

Make sure that you go through all the regular noise reduction tips we've given you above before even considering buying a power conditioner, because earth loops also pick up pops, crackles and computer noises as well as hum. Make sure you keep all your connections clean and free of oxidisation, and remember that power conditioners don't fix earth loops.

LEGENDARY MUSIC STRINGS SINCE 1958



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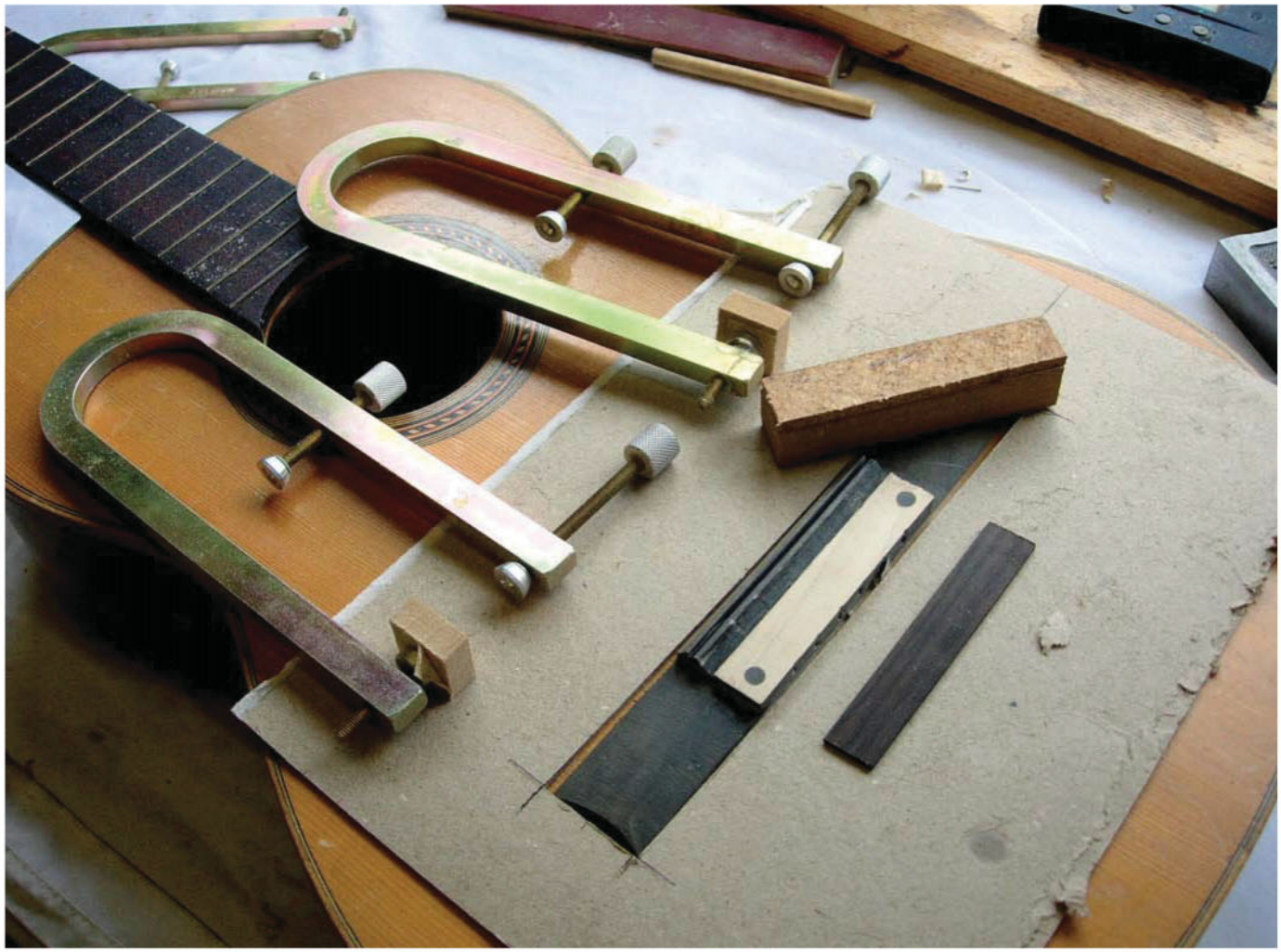

Classical Gas

There's nothing better for kickstarting a youngster's playing career than an old, easy-playing nylon-string classical. Luthier **Dave King** shows us how a little careful work can breathe new life into an old guitar...

I regularly get people bringing in old-nylon string guitars for repair and setup. These instruments have often been in the cupboard for 30 years and many have a sentimental attachment (ah, the memory of that first E minor chord). While some are beyond saving, you do find some with solid tops and decent fretboards that can be brought back to life, but few are worth paying someone over a hundred pounds to sort them out.

On the other hand, with a little love and care, most of the work can be done at home. The nylon-string guitar we have here was picked up at a boot fair near Bryon Bay in Australia around 15 years ago for a mere $2, and after serving as a travel guitar for years, it went into the cupboard. However, it does have a solid back and sides, reasonable tuners and a neck that's pretty straight – so it's worth the effort. Have a good look at the guitar before you do anything, work out what needs doing, and tackle one task at a time.

First, we're going to work on the bridge. The tie block – that's the bit the string goes around – is a bit tatty, as it's made from a soft piece of maple and the strings have pulled into it over the years. The best thing we can do is to plane it down a little and fix a Macassar ebony veneer to the top (it would often be made from bone, but bone is difficult to work with in this situation, and ebony will work well enough).

Before you start to plane the bridge down, cut out a cardboard template to go around the bridge; this will protect the soundboard while you're working on it. You'll also need to pull the saddle out: for this, use a pair of fret-pullers. The tie block needs to finish up about half a millimetre below the surface where the saddle sits, so allowing for the thickness of the ebony we're going to add

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on (1mm), we need to be a total of 1.5mm lower. The best way to plane a bridge down is to use a very sharp block plane; blunt tools never, ever work properly.

This bridge has had screws put in it at some point, probably to hold it in place while being glued, so we need to make sure we don't go over the screws with the plane, as blades really dislike metal. If you need or want to remove the screws then do so, and then drill the holes a little deeper, and replace them.

The ebony I'm using was bought as a head veneer from David Dykes Luthier Supplies (contact 01435 812315, or www.luthierssupplies.co.uk) so it's already the right thickness. Cut the bridge veneer about half a millimetre over length using a cutting block; the ends can be sanded smooth and to the correct length using a sanding block and cutting block. Make sure the end of the cutting block is square: this way the sanding block can run on the end of it, ensuring the veneer ends are square. Also make sure the veneer is the right size – it will be difficult to reduce it once glued to the bridge.

To glue the veneer, use some bridge clamps with blocks of MDF on the feet; I'm using a block with some cork glued to it to add more protection and to ensure an even clamping pressure. Apply the glue (Titebond's the stuff) to the face of the bridge, and hold the veneer firmly with your fingers for a minute; this lets the glue 'grab' a little, and stops it from sliding about when you tighten the clamps. Place the clamping block over the veneer, clamp it in place, clean off any excess glue and leave it to dry for a whole 24 hours.

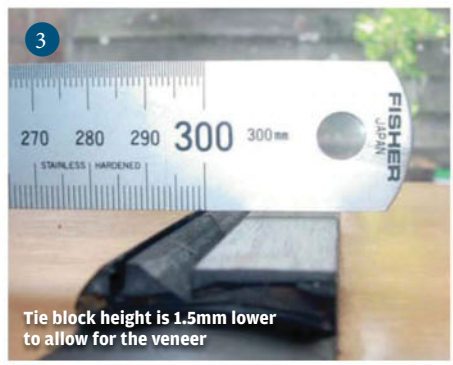
Once dry, the veneer can be cleaned up using sanding sticks: gently take the edges off the tie block and clean the top face. Our bridge still looks a little worse for wear, so we'll clean the rest of it up using glasspaper, then stain the rest of the bridge black using wood stain from a DIY shop. Mask the area around the bridge, brush on the stain, and don't use too much or it'll run on to the top.

Now we can move onto stoning the frets, re-profiling the tops and getting rid of the sharp edges. Use a flat oilstone to level the frets, working your way up and down the fretboard using a circular motion with the stone. The frets on our test instrument are pretty good and the neck is quite straight, so all that's needed is a very light stoning.

When the frets are level, use an angled block set to 35 degrees and a sanding stick to smooth off the edges of the frets. Now all the frets are level with the edge of the fretboard, it's the time to take off any sharp edges. I personally use a triangular needle file with the edges specially ground smooth to stop the file from removing wood from the fretboard.

1 The bridge isn't pretty, but it's saveable. Note the added screws

2 First, remove the saddle. Fret pullers will hoick it out nicely



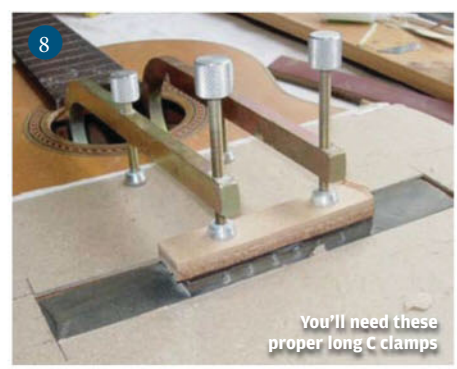
3 Tie block height is 1.5mm lower to allow for the veneer

4 Planing the bridge; your plane should be scary sharp for this

5 Preparing the veneer. We're using 1mm thick ebony

6 Square ends: use a sanding block and a cutting block

7 Preparing the MDF and cork blocks for the gluing


8 You'll need these proper long C clamps

9 Finishing off with a sanding stick gives the final touch

10 Adding stain. Be careful: a little black stain goes a long way

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Most classical players don't need fingerboard side dots, but they can help beginners

Now the frets can be reprofiled using a fret file, which are available in different sizes to suit your fret wire. Use either a fretboard protector (try Touchstone Tonewoods on 01737 221064) or mask between the frets using masking tape to avoid scratching the fretboard. Start with some 320 grit paper wrapped around the file, keep going until you've removed any marks left by the oilstone, then move up to 600 grit wet and dry. When the frets are nicely profiled, give them a polish with 0000-grade wire wool and lemon oil.

How about some side dots? Most classical players don't need them but the average beginner could use the help. The third, fifth, seventh, ninth and 12th positions will do just fine. The plastic bar that I'm using comes in various colours and sizes: a white 2mm diameter one will do the job. Mark the centres of the holes with a scriber, and check at least twice; there's little more annoying than drilling in the wrong place.

You'll probably be able to use a drill for most of the holes, but drilling at the 12 fret can be difficult. I use a length of dowel and drill a hole in the end with a 2mm drill bit. I then glue the drill bit in with superglue, giving an 'extended' drill bit that will allow you to get to the 12th fret markers (or further, if you want to). You don't need to use it in the actual drill itself; just turn the dowel by hand, as you're only going in a couple of millimetres. Put a little superglue in the holes and tap the bar in gently with a hammer, leave the glue to dry, and then cut it off using snips. The bar can then be trimmed level with the edge of the fretboard using a nice sharp chisel.

The nut and the saddle on this guitar are bone, so there's no need to replace them. The saddle needs reshaping, though, as it appears to be flat at the moment; it needs an angle of about 20 degrees on the top of it going down towards the tie block. Use a sanding block, and once you've achieved the correct angle you'll also need to round over the front edge of the saddle or it'll cut through the strings. Use the sanding block to ensure a straight edge, then polish with some 600 grit wet and dry.

Now for the strings. With classical guitars, this is a whole subject in itself. First, we'll put a little oil on the tuners – it may help keep them working for another 30 years. Let's start with the two E strings. Pictures 22 and 22 show how they are tied to the tie block: the wound strings

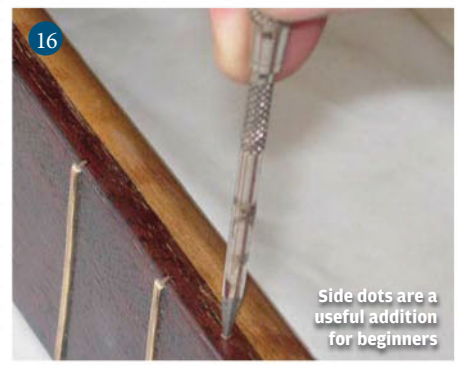
11
Stoning the frets using a circular motion

12
Checking the fretboard with a quality straight edge

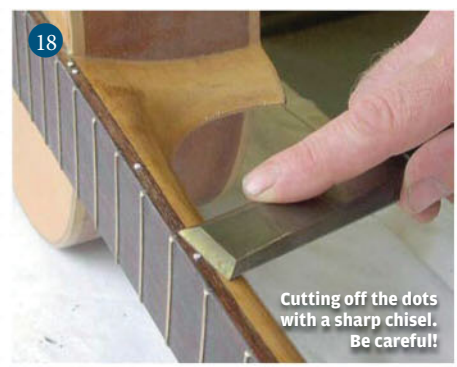
13
Finishing the fret ends with a block, making sure of a 35 degree angle

14
Profiling the frets. Work from 320 grit wet and dry up to 600

15
Finishing the frets with fine wire wool and lemon oil


16
Side dots are a useful addition for beginners

17
Drill bit extension is useful when access gets tricky


18
Cutting off the dots with a sharp chisel. Be careful!

19
The saddle angle should point downwards about 20 degrees

20
Sanding the saddle: make sure you're keeping it square

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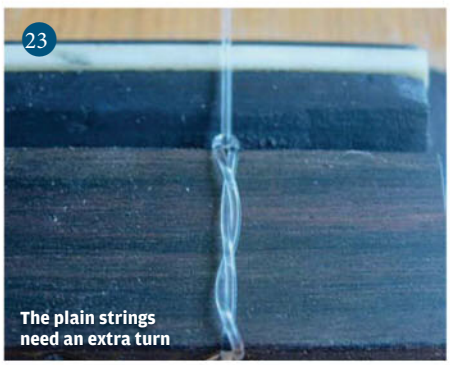
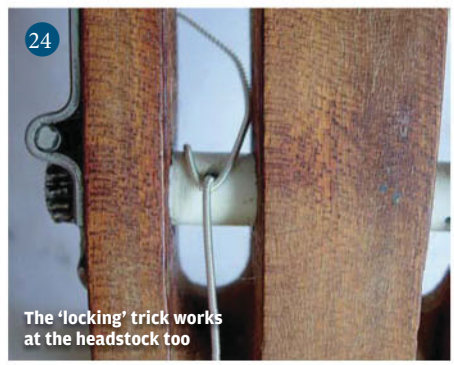
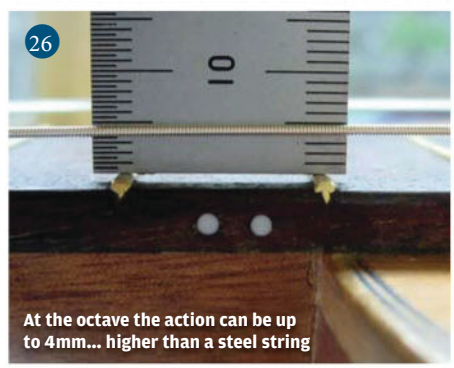
Oiling the tuners: just a tiny spot will be enough

The wound strings need just one wrap underneath


The plain strings need an extra turn


The 'locking' trick works at the headstock too

Approximately 0.7mm is right for the action at the first fret


At the octave the action can be up to 4mm... higher than a steel string

Cutting the nut slots and creating the important break angle

More nut work: make sure the tops of the string are level

Here's a properly-strung bridge. You shouldn't get any slippage

Finished nut. Note the slots are just half a string deep

are wrapped around themselves once and locked at the back of the tie block, but the treble strings – which have more of a tendency to slip – are wound around themselves twice before being locked at the back of the tie block, with the tension on the string holding it all place and stopping any slippage. At the tuning head end we have to do a similar thing. Put the string through the hole, then pull it back around itself; when the string is tensioned one gets locked under the other, and stays in place.

With the two E strings on, check the action at the first fret and the 12th fret. At the first fret on the bass string you should be looking for a gap between the top of the fret and the underside of the string of about 0.7mm, and at the 12th fret for a gap of between 3.4mm and 4mm depending on your playing and the type of string used (higher tension strings will generally play at a lower action; the more tension on a string, the smaller the circle it will vibrate in). On the treble string you'll again need about 0.7mm at the first fret and 2.7mm to 3mm at the 12th fret. Start off on the high side, as it's easy to lower the action, but to raise it you'll need a new nut and saddle. If the strings are too high, bring them down a little at a time from both ends. If you lower it right down at the nut then reduce it by a touch at the 12th fret, you will in turn lower it more at the first fret.

The good news is that as the strings on nylon-strung guitars are all of a similar gauge, you'll only need one or two nut files. Hold the file at an angle of about 10 degrees to ensure the string is held firmly over the nut, and file down a little at a time. When you've done the E strings, put the rest of the strings on and adjust all the strings so that the tops are level.

To reduce the action at the 12th fret you'll need to slacken the strings off and remove material from the underside of the saddle. Mark the amount to take off with a felt tip and use the sanding block with a square fence; this will make sure the bottom of the saddle stays nice and flat. Once happy with the action you can finish the top of the nut to leave just half of the string protruding, and, when you pop the nut back on, add a touch of glue underneath to hold it in place. With nylon strings it's a good idea to tune them up to pitch and stretch them by pulling them away from the fretboard, tuning to pitch and repeating a few times until they stop slipping.

We're all finished, and a decent Spanish guitar has been saved from the scrapheap and is ready to place in an eager beginner's hands. The only trouble is, a correctly set-up classical is such a nice thing to have around that you'll probably be rather tempted to keep it for yourself...

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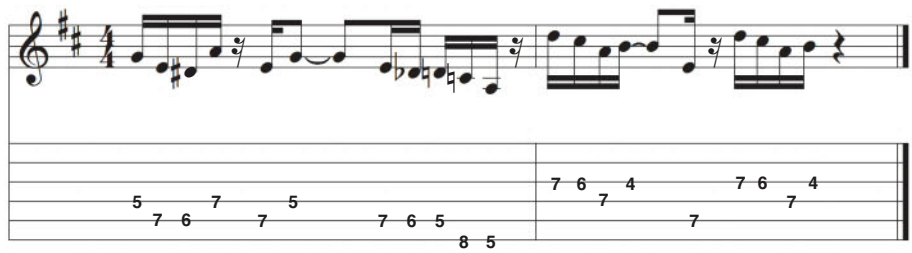
Work In Progress

Unfairly castigated in the ever-rewritten history of rock, prog was – and is – the vehicle for some fantastically exciting and forward-looking music...

Progressive rock came about as musicians attempted to break out of the standard blues guitar trio-based music of the late '60s. Often classically trained and sometimes – like the founding members of Genesis – public school-educated, the players tried to go (like Madness) one step beyond, investigating new forms of music by attempting to influence their standard rock/blues playing with new, more complex harmonies and arrangements. This eventually led to songs clocking in at the 20-minute mark (they'd surely have gone further had the CD format been around in the '70s). As a result of this, and some often pretentious mythological lyrics, prog rock is often seen as overwhelmingly complicated; the rock equivalent of the worst excesses of fusion. Look beyond the wizard's capes, though, and you'll find some wonderful musical ideas. And we all need some of those.

1 STEVE HOWE-STYLE RIFF — 4/4 TIME

Exercise 1 is inspired by a Steve Howe part from the *Close To The Edge* period of Yes. Note how the riff – while quite quick and tricky to finger – utilises mainly the minor pentatonic/blues scale, and plays with the minor/major third dichotomy present in blues. Steve Howe was a player who came from country and blues roots, and pieces such as *The Clap* from *The Yes Album* show off some startling fingerpicking skills. The suggested tempo is 126 bpm.



2 RECURRING MOTIFS — 4/4 TIME

This second exercise would be used as a recurring motif. Note how the timing is displaced: the lick is effectively in 7/8 time, though the band plays in fours. Try it over a straight groove, and check the effect. Simple things are being manipulated to make them sound complicated: this use of recurring motifs is a primarily classical device and is a mainstay of prog tunes, especially during extended instrumental sections.

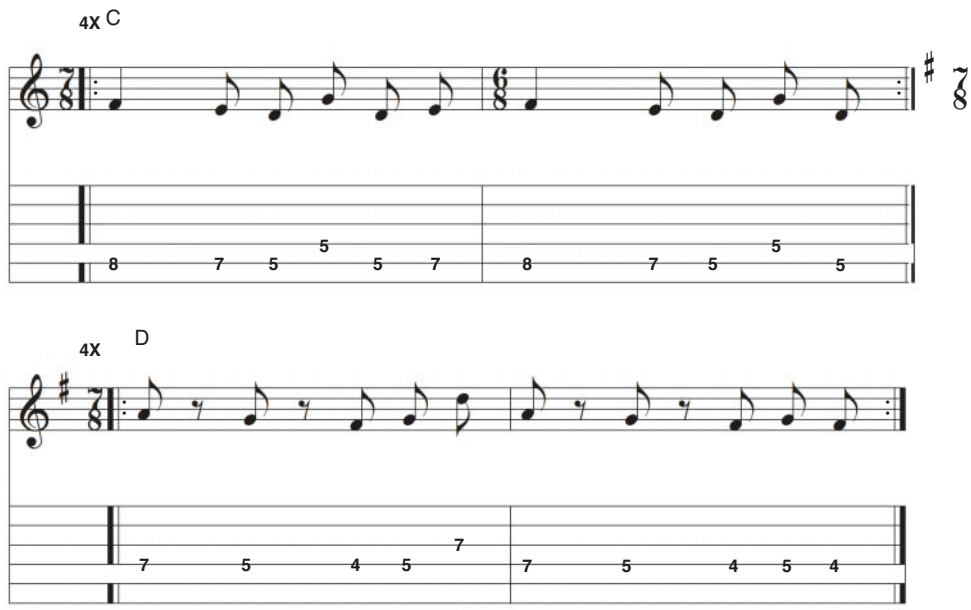
Progressive rock guitar players tended to go against the grain of the day, eschewing conventional heroics in favour of a tightly arranged, highly-crafted approach to their parts and their tunes. Though brimming with instrumental passages, prog tunes would be made up of a number of basic parts which only gave the appearance of complexity when played together and would rarely include long solos. This tradition is kept alive in the latest incarnations of Robert Fripp's free-wheeling creation King Crimson and its various offshoots, such Crimson ProjeKct with guitarist Adrian Belew – extreme interlocking music, all driven by the discipline imposed by Fripp. Again, the suggested tempo is 126 bpm.

3 RHYTHMS & INTERVALS — 5/4 & 4/4 TIME

This third exercise is a homage to a Robert Fripp lick from King Crimson's *Lark's Tongues in Aspic*. Fripp's playing is often angular and dissonant – characteristics which the rhythms and intervals used here show off nicely. This would be the kind of line played in unison by the whole band. Note the slight nod to odd-meter playing, with the bars of 5/4, actually played by the drums, though the riff will sound great over a series of bars of four (it'll work its way back to the one after five of them, as well). This is a good example of a progressive rock tune influenced more by heavy rock – indeed, the King Crimson tune *Twenty-First Century Schizoid Man* from *In The Court Of The Crimson King* is about as metal as it gets. Check out his abrasive playing on David Bowie's marvellous *Fashion*. Fripp once said he was 'spraying burning guitar' over Bowie's album *Scary Monsters*; a very apt description. The suggested tempo is 112 bpm.

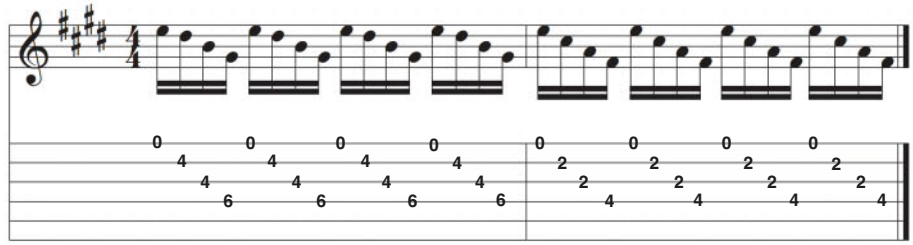
4 A QUESTION OF TIME — 7/8 TIME

This is a more complex group of time signatures, but the riff is actually quite easy. You're more than welcome to feel the first two bars as one bar of 13/8, but it's easier to digest as 7/8 and 6/8. This is a Marillion-type thing, the group who picked up the prog baton in the early '80s, had a massive hit with *Kayleigh* and then burrowed their way back underground. Steve Rothery was never one for playing difficult things. He uses the guitar as an arrangement tool rather than as the bones of an entire tune, as a more heavy rock band often would. In some ways it's best to think of Mr Rothery as a more sophisticated version of U2's Edge. Play this exercise at 152 bpm.



5 THE GENESIS OF AN IDEA — 4/4 TIME

This exercise is inspired by one of the great progressive texturalists, Steve Hackett from Genesis. This is a fingerstyle part, similar in structure to ones found on *The Lamb Lies Down On Broadway* using slightly odd chords. Again, this is one of many parts, and one of the problems of dissecting a prog rock guitarist's style is that they tended to wield so many of them well; classical, jazz, rock, blues and country, to name but a few. Play at 138 bpm.



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DRILLS FOR THRILLS

Any Major Dude

You've been running, but you can avoid it no longer. It's time for a major scale workout!

They're the scourge of many a music student – but if approached correctly, major scales can massively benefit your playing. Normally, when practising a specific technique, it's best to isolate it with a specific exercise, but scales enable us to work on picking technique, timing, position shifting (see Exercises 2 and 3) and dynamic control, all in one go. All three exercises are written in quavers and are best practised to a metronome. Use alternate picking starting with a downstroke, and play each exercise as quavers to the metronome (two notes per click). Start at crotchet = 100 (novices can begin slower, say 60 to 80). Then try playing them as triplets (three notes per click), then semiquavers (four per click). The Roman numerals indicate the correct fret for your first finger. Since the fretting fingers are spread out one-finger-per-fret, this tells you where the other fingers will be.

1 THE A MAJOR SCALE

4/4 TIME

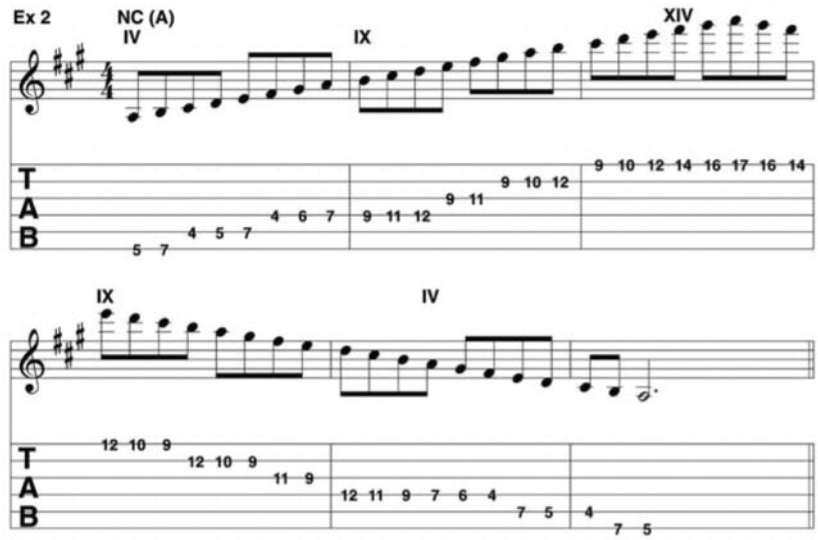
The Roman numeral IV (that's 'four' for all you non-classics scholars out there) indicates that this one-octave A major scale is to be played in the fourth position. This means the first finger is placed at the fourth fret, so the first two notes in this scale at the fifth and seventh frets will be played with the second and fourth fingers respectively.

2 MAJOR SCALE WITH SHIFTS

4/4 TIME

This three-octave A major scale makes fuller use of the fretboard but involves two position shifts – one on the way up and one on the way down. Make sure these are done as smoothly as possible and that the fretting hand thumb moves with the fingers.

Obviously this is not the only fretboard path for a three-octave major scale, and this pattern will be harder to achieve on a guitar without a full cutaway... but try it anyway. If it proves to be too difficult, then pack your bags and move down three frets to the key of F#, which will make the upper notes more accessible.

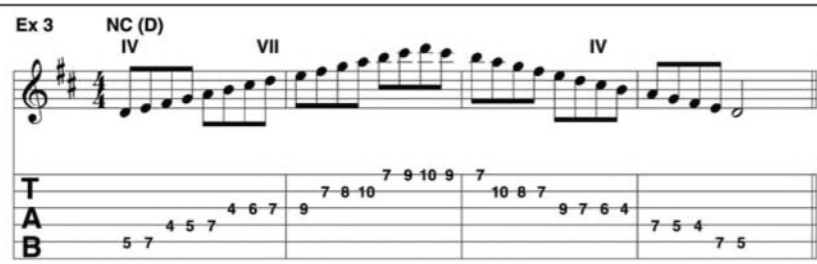


3 TWO-OCTAVE MAJOR SCALE

4/4 TIME

For our third exercise, we'll look at a two-octave major scale with the root on the fifth string. Unlike Exercise 1, this time you'll need a position shift to play the second octave.

To make a change from using alternate picking starting with a downstroke, try alternate picking, starting with an upstroke. Other possibilities include using all downstrokes and all upstrokes (mind, these two options will only be feasible if you're playing at slow and medium tempos). If you're plucking the strings with your fingers then try alternating index and middle, then middle and index, then middle and ring finger, then ring finger and middle, then index and ring finger, then ring finger and middle finger. Confusing?



Don't worry... just try each one at a slow tempo and build up gradually.

Incorporate dynamics into the scales, too. For example, play the ascending scale loudly, then the descending one quietly, then vice versa. Another possibility is to play the first octave of the scale loud, then the second octave quiet, then continue alternating between loud and quiet for each successive octave.

Also, try a crescendo on the ascending part of the scale – that is, starting quietly and gradually getting louder – then on the descending part of the scale try a diminuendo... starting loud and gradually getting quieter.

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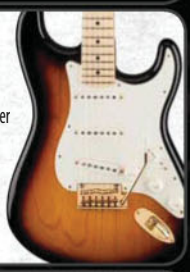

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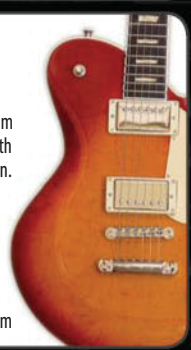

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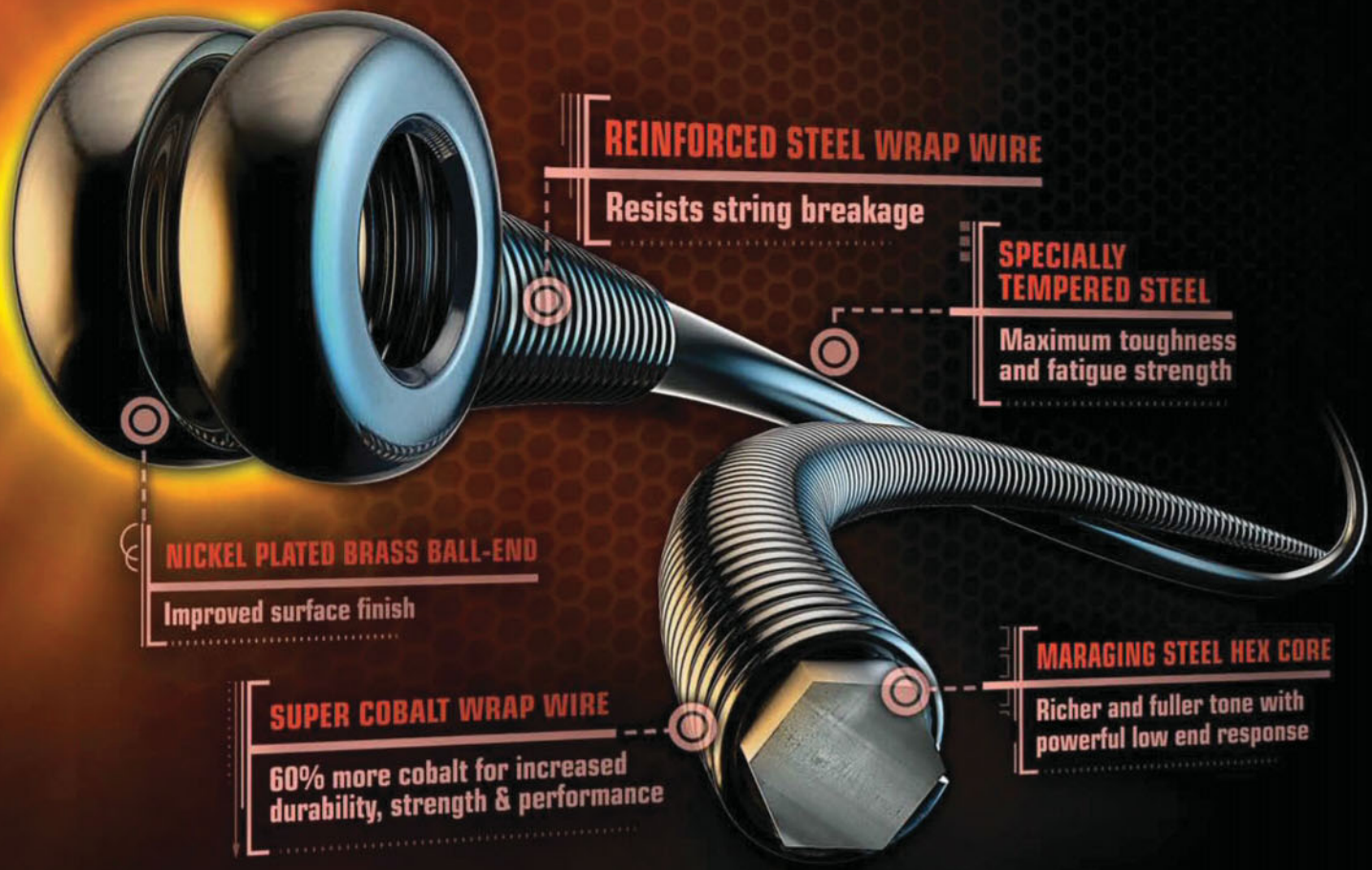

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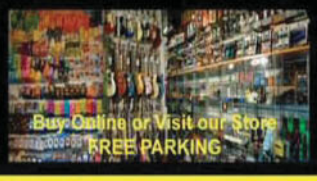

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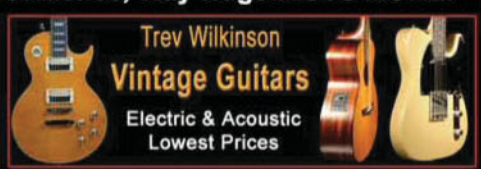

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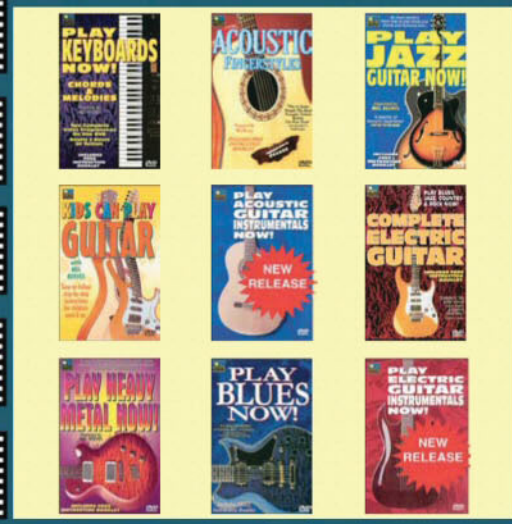

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Marshall JMP Master Volume 50W combo 2x12", fantastic tone, £595. Orange Tiny Terror, £195. Tel: 01142 551785, Sheffield

Fender USA Telecaster, midnight candy, with Stagg case in vgc, £750 ono. Tel: 01603 502090, Norwich

Seagull Maritime SWS Q1 electro-acoustic, solid top, solid rosewood back and sides, Quantum Electrics, mint condition, padded seagull bag, 10W amp, £550. Tel: 0114 2831610 or 07948 418442, Sheffield

Orville by Gibson Les Paul Junior DC, TV yellow, Johnny Thunders style, £875. Japanese Fender Strat, red, £265. Seymour Duncan Antiquity P90, £75. Tel: Paul 01785 211769, Stafford

Fender Hot Rod Deluxe III, unused, £575 ono. Roland Cube 80XL £180, home use only. Takamine G Series electro-acoustic, £180, immaculate, hardly used. Tel: Tony 01442 876740, Herts

Tokai 1978 Silverstar S-type, cream with maple fretboard, made in Japan, brass nut and saddles, superb condition, £650. Tel: 01386 861873

Gibson Les Paul Trad, 2012, Heritage cherry sunburst, home use only, unplayed condition, great tone, Gibson hard case. £1300 ono. Tel: Graham 07766 170808, South Staffs

Catania Carmelo ERA1 thin archtop, £175. Salvador Ibanez ukulele in croc. case, £150. Dot fretboard Les Paul Studio, fitted DiMarzios, £595. Sunburst Thunderbird 76, £2700. Tel: 07773 276815

Vox AC30 top boost reverb, 1979, McKenzie speakers, good condition with footswitch and cover, £750. Tel: John 01228 534889, Cumbria

Ampeg L.Guitar V9/SSt Altec stack. V4/V2 stacks. Gu12 Jensen combo. All GWO documented, suit Rolling Stones tribute or Faces tribute? Reasonable offers invited. Tel: 01179 770323, Bristol

PRS McCarty pickups, set of two, complete with chrome covers, £150. Steve Vai Bad Horsie Wah pedal, £50. Tel: Colin 07732 947131, Epsom

Collings I-35LC, fantastic, faded cherry, as new, mint condition. With deluxe original case, £2400. Tel: 0047 93035501 or email torsteina27@gmail.com

Orange Rocker 30 1x12" combo, includes footswitch, cover, Light use, immaculate, £375 + p&p, ultimate Orange sound. Tel: Tony 01296 738486 or email tony.cox7@btinternet.com, North Bucks

Ibanez K5 Fieldy Signature Bass, mahogany body, walnut top and back, wenge/bubinga neck, rosewood fretboard, good condition with OHSC, £400. Tel: 07779 023883 or email pdommett@me.com

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Fender 1966 Jazz Special Bass, worn with age and use, photos available, sensible offers entertained. Tel: 01572 771132, Leicstershire

Gibson USA Les Paul Junior Billie Joe Armstrong, single cut, sunburst, all original, mint, Gibson BJA Leopard hard case. £1000, Jesse, London. Tel: 07472 694929 or email jesseappleton@hotmail.com

Gibson 1958 ES-125T, good condition for age, complete with hard case, £1250 ono. Tel: Clive 07721 458523 or email clive.hoops@virgin.net, Plymouth

Fender 2000 American Traditional Strat, serial no: N902272, black, near mint condition, never gigged, no case. £450. Also Fender M80 amp (non-valve), £140. Tel: 01322 347641, near Dartford, Kent

Audition vintage amp, stored many years, piggyback model, trannie, needs a switch clean, 15 watts-ish, buyer collects, £50, Tel: 01582 882160, Beds

TwinStomp active A/B-Y pedal. as new, boxed, instructions, £85. Tel: 0114 2556185, Sheffield area

Fender 100W FM 2x12", as new, £130. Peavey Predator, £120. Squier Telecaster, rough looking but good, £90. Two 12" Celestion speakers, as new, £50. Tel: 07830 444829, Derby

Gibson 1978 ES-175D vintage sunburst, vgc, original hard case and receipt, £2500. Vox AC30, 12 months old, immaculate, gigged twice, £750. Celestion Greenback speakers, £650. Tel: 07980 035140, Sheffield

Trace Elliot Pro UK bass rig, vgc: bottom cab 1x18" 300W, top 2x10" plus horn 200W, with 'tuff' covers. Two amps Trace Elliott with EQ, 150W. New, unused, Ashdown MAG 300W, offers. Tel: Steve 01256 780025, Basingstoke

Boss Micro Cube, effects and amp models, ideal practice or busking amp, excellent condition, mains/battery, half price, £45. Also various Tele pickups from £15 each. Tel: 01429 296413, Teesside

Fender Strat, Custom Shop '62 Relic Tone Machine, surf green, rosewood board, John Cruz pickups, vintage brown case, with all candy, certificate of authenticity, six months old. Save £700: £1850. Tel: 01255 435967, Essex

Trace Elliot GP7 4x10" bass combo, original British built, probably mid-'80s, £150. Call Graham 01634 232177

Gibson ES-135, deep red colour, P100 pickups, superb condition, great blues to rock guitar, beautiful looks and sounds, comes with padded Gibson gig bag, £995. Tel: 07981 569027, Cheltenham

Fender Robert Cray Strat, hardtail, sunburst, mint, £550. Fender Lite Ash Tele, natural, mint, £350. Takamine EG334C electro-acoustic, mint with hard case, £400. Tel: Richard 02392 348487, Portsmouth

Orange MT20 Micro Terror amp and Orange PPC108 lead guitar head speaker cabinet, brand new, boxed, never used, £130. Tel: 07717 671744, Bristol

Vintage 1964 Fender Musicmaster II, 100 per cent original with OHSC. Excellent condition for age with no issues. Case has a bump in it. £1,200 ono. Buyer to collect from Preston, Lancashire. Email: twentyhertz@twentyhertz.co.uk

Various electric guitars for sale, mostly Fenders and Gibsons. Tel: 07887 952916 for details, South Cumbria area

Yamaha SG1000, made in Japan 1993, original brown hard case, brown sunburst with gold hardware, mint condition apart from one small ding to neck, £900. Tel: Mick 07802 571278, Northants

Camps Naci electro-acoustic guitar, left-handed, Fishman pickup, great condition, buyer collects, £250. Tel: 07791 219506 Thame, Oxon

Burns Marvin 40th Anniversary model 2004, very little home use only, mint condition with all case candy plus signed certificate, £950 ono. Tel: Steve 01246 280299, Chesterfield

Fender Telecaster American Vintage reissue, '52 Tele Special, 1999. Two colour sunburst, gold hardware, Tolex case, leather strap etc, mint condition, very rare, £1250. Tel: Mick 07802 571278, Northants

Tokai Goldstar Sound, R/N, rare, pink metallic, good, £450. Carvin Nomad combo 50W, tweed, good, £350. Tel: Richard 02392 348487, Portsmouth

Gibson ES-335, 2008,cherry red plain top, mint, home use only, cased with Custom Shop certificate, £1350 ovno. Tel: Geoff 0121 358 2704, Birmingham

Mesa Boogie Maverick 2x12" 35W class A combo amp. Two separate distinctive channels, great sounds, blond, c/w footswitch, manual, custom cover, excellent condition. Collectable investment opportunity, £895. 01513 365450, Cheshire

Fender Telecaster reissue of 1950s blackguard, as new condition. Fender tweed case. £700. Tel Jon 01458 211173, Somerset

Ayers ACM single-cut auditorium acoustic, luthier designed by Gerard Gilet, all solid woods, wonderful warm sound, semi-solid case, £300 + p&p. Tel: Tony 01296738486 or email tony.cox7@btinternet.com, North Bucks.

Martin HD28V, 175 years Anniversary model, mint condition, Martin case, £1950, might swap jazz guitar with cash either way, W.H.Y. Call 020 8908 4278, Harrow

Fender Twin Reverb 135W silverface USA '70s model. Replacement Celestion speakers. Loud, clear, classic combo amp. Recent service, good condition, c/w footswitch, tilt-back legs. £675. Call 01513 365450, Cheshire

Goldtone resonator Paul Beard signature model, round neck, as new condition, with hard case. £525. Tel 01260 272417, East Cheshire

Guitar Magazine, every title, every issue, pristine condition, thousands to choose from, £150 the lot, buyer collects. Tel Jon 01458 211173, Somerset

Fender Mustang Pawn Shop Special, candy apple red with Fender hard case, excellent condition £400 ono. Email hunkydory@tiscali.co.uk or call 01282 868166, Lancs

Dr Z amp head, 40W, mint condition with cover, cool amp, remedy hand-wired, £870. Te: 01513 399492, Cheshire

Fender 2011 Baja Telecaster, Custom Shop-designed, maple fretboard, black scratchplate, S1 switch, immaculate condition, incl hard case, £575. Tel: 01386 861873

Taylor 314ce, 2005, excellent condition, nicely matured tone, great guitar with no issues, original hard case included. Photos available, £850. Tel Mike 07799 640523 or email mjshaw@btinternet.com, Sussex

Fender 62 reissue Custom Tele in sunburst, as new with gig bag, £850. Fender Newporter electro-acoustic 12-string, as new with hard case, £250. Call 0208 875 6118, London

Gibson 1976 Limited Edition Les Paul Specials: single cut '55' sunburst; double cut '58' TV yellow, £3500. Pair WEM 2x12" speaker cabs circa 1973, £150. Laney RBW200 bass combo, £89. Tel: 07773 276815, Westmorland

Laney VC30 210 30 watt valve combo, 2x10 Jensen speakers, excellent condition, home use only, £300 ono. Call Graham on 07780 907361, Norwich

Fender Contemporary Strat, 1985, Japan, very rare emerald green, fantastic condition, HS, string locking Fender/Schaller trem, all original, £650, pics available. Email old66@hotmail.co.uk, Cardiff

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EKO 1960s 12-string acoustic and Antora 1960s electric, offers. Call 01200 423595, Lancashire

Vintage Music Man 65W 2x10 reverb combo. Good condition but with one small tear in speaker cloth. Perfect working order, £300 ono. Tel: 07967 957712, Fife, Scotland

1940s Selmer lap steel and matching Truvoice amp in case (amp requires rebuild but speaker works) and original Duclo slide, picks, strings and accessories catalogue, £325. Tel Gary 020 8207 5015 or Fiona. zg@sky.com for jpegs

Levin Goliath LM-26, 1963, excellent original condition for age, restrung and soft case, £650.00. Tel: Gary 020 8207 5015 or email Fiona.zg@sky.com for jpegs

Breedlove OM/SMe Voice Revival acoustic, spruce top, mahogany back and sides, ebony fingerboard, LR Baggs pickup, as new with hard case, stunning guitar, amazing sound, £2500. Email rdjamesguitar@gmail.com

Epiphone 1964 vintage Rivoli EB bass, sunburst with cream binding, in excellent condition, serial no 68165, £2500, pics on request. Call 07935 607035 anytime, N Ireland

Marshall 6100M Anniversary Series three-channel 100W valve amp with Marshall JCM900 1936 2x12" speaker cabinet, mint, £680. Tel: 01386 861873

Marshall 1987X 50 watt Valve head in flightcase with Marshall 1960AX 4x12" Greenbacks 100 watt cab with cover, immaculate, £1295. Tel: 01386 861873

WANTED

Fender Highway One Tele, sunburst preferred, excellent condition required. Tel: 01306 740841, Surrey

Award-Session Stockton amp. Phone/txt with price or will swap guitar/amps for it. Tel: 07887 972019, Lanarkshire

Brown-haired bassist wanted for hard rock band. Must have long hair and be over 22. Contact Gismus@aol.com

Yamaha SG200 guitar finished in pearl white. Tel/txt: 07710 161598 or email Chris-r1968@hotmail.co.uk

Fender Tweed '50s Champ, Princeton or Deluxe amp, must be original. Tel: 0151 638 9567, Cheshire area

Egnator Rebel 30 combo wanted, also Roland-ready Strat, Mexican, white, must be good working condition, pref London. Tel: Mick 020 8530 1208

Gibson 2008 50th Anniversary Explorer DSX50 brimstone burst, excellent to mint, w/case. Also: original hard case for Gibson Gothic Explorer. Tel: Tony 01535 606002 or info@telluris.info

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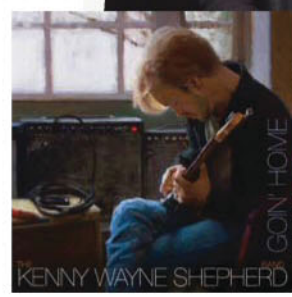
Soundtrack of my life

Kenny Wayne Shepherd

Photo: Mark Seliger

Sure, this blues player loves the blues, but also bluesy rock – and he's got a thing about first albums...



At seven years old Kenny Wayne Shepherd was taken to a Stevie Ray Vaughan gig. Mesmerised and inspired by the show, he determined to make the guitar his life. Aged 21 he exploded on the US Billboard charts, scoring five hit singles in 1995 alone, while his *Trouble Is...* album, featuring Noah Hunt on vocals, became the biggest-seller of 1996, making him a Strat-toting superstar. His current band features Hunt and SRV's Double Trouble drummer Chris Layton, as well as bassist Tony Franklin and keys man Riley Osbourn. He took the crack unit to Shreveport, Louisiana to record *Goin' Home,* the first ever KWS album made on his own doorstep. The set list picks 14 covers from the catalogues of his heroes: SRV, Albert, BB and Freddie King, Muddy Waters, and Howlin' Wolf. It's a heartfelt homage to the music he grew up on.

The Jimi Hendrix Experience
ARE YOU EXPERIENCED

I'm attracted to debut albums because they're the introduction of a sound and the songs that put people on the map. I'll never forget hearing

the title track to this, with the backwards drums and the crazy guitar, and even to me as a kid in the '80s it sounded otherworldly. You knew this guy was totally revolutionary.

BB King
LIVE AT THE REGAL

I also love live records – they really show the amazing abilities of the artists and the passion they pour forth. BB is on fire on this, his phrasing,

his tone, his singing... it's prime BB King and the crowd is so into it, you can hear the girls screaming! It almost sounds like they're watching the Beatles or something.

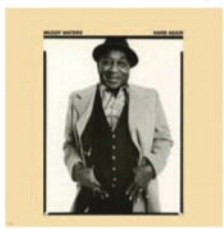
Albert King
LIVE WIRE BLUES POWER

I love the way Albert was able to captivate the listener. He didn't have a million guitar licks, he had variations, but it was the passion and the

bending of the strings that gave him a unique sound. On this, his guitar is unreal! He often used pick-up bands and you can hear the spontaneous effect of that on here.

Muddy Waters
HARD AGAIN

My favourite blues album of all time! You've got Johnny Winter producing and playing guitar, and he was just on fire. There's some pretty masterful



interpretations of Muddy's songs – *Crosseyed Cat* has an unbelievable groove, and *Bus Driver* is fantastic. I'm a hopeless cheerleader for this record.

Stevie Ray Vaughan & Double Trouble
TEXAS FLOOD

Stevie was instrumental in inspiring me to pick up a guitar and get serious about playing it, and this is his first record. They just went in and played the

songs they'd been doing in their set. They didn't go back and fix a bunch of stuff. He sang and played those solos live. This is the perfect representation of who they were as a band.

ZZ Top
FANDANGO!

When I was a kid I had the vinyl record. I'd go into my grandfather's room where the record player was, turn the stereo up and jump up and down on

the bed pretending to play guitar. It's a mixture of live and studio stuff. I always loved the energy of the first two songs, *Thunderbird* and *Jailhouse Rock*.

Cream
GOLD

If I had to narrow it down, my favourite Cream LP would be *Disraeli Gears* because it has *Strange Brew, Sunshine Of My Love* and *Tales Of Brave*

Ulysses, but *Gold* gives the range of all they did. They were like a blues band, but they just started branching out and pushing the limits. Great for really heavy guitar playing.

Van Halen
VAN HALEN

Another debut. I think everybody when they first heard Eddie play *Eruption* was like 'What is this guy doing!?' In a way, he was a modern day Jimi

Hendrix of sorts. He pushed the limits of the instrument. It doesn't matter what kind of musician you are, everybody has to give it up to Eddie Van Halen. He's just that talented.

Allman Brothers
THE ALLMAN BROTHERS BAND

And one more debut! I'm drawn to bands that are either blues bands or have a deep appreciation for the blues, and that's evident in the Allman's core

sound. *Whipping Post* is incredible, you hear great slide, you get great straight guitar, soulful raspy vocals. This was the sound of the Southern United States at that time.

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